

MY MAIDEN EFFORT

The Personal Confessions of
Well Known American Authors
Collected by the
AUTHORS' LEAGUE OF AMERICA

Edited by
GELETT
BURGESS

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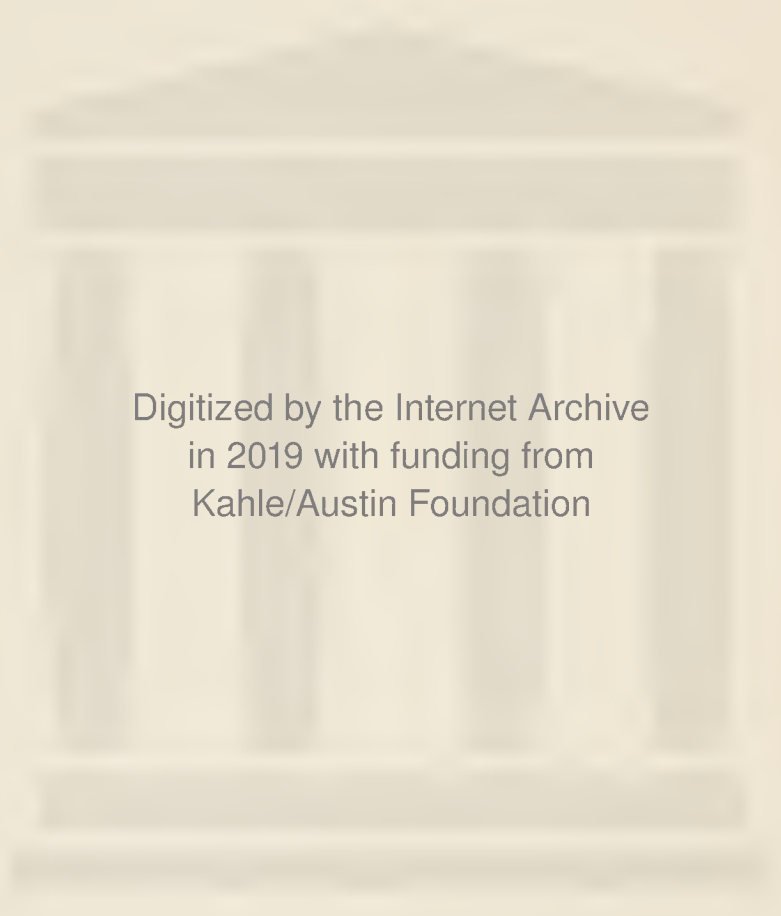


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MY MAIDEN EFFORT



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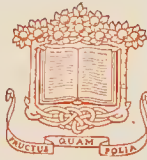
MY MAIDEN EFFORT

*Being the Personal Confessions of
Well-known American Authors
as to their Literary Beginnings*

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

GELETT BURGESS



PUBLISHED FOR
THE AUTHORS' LEAGUE OF AMERICA

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INTRODUCTION

Fain had I been formal, staid. But I find, upon re-reading this Introduction, that my native penchant for the incongruous, the perverse, even the sacrilegious, has again betrayed me. My embarrassment is akin to that which I suffered during my first meeting with William Dean Howells, in those wondrous *fin de siècle* years from which, as K. F. G. says, anyone who was then young, "dates."

I was to call with Frank Norris. And in view of our respect for the beloved Dean of American Letters (as well as our own importance as literary Lochinvars), we agreed that the occasion should be costumed *de rigueur*. Many, many years will elapse before I forget the mordant, ironic smile with which, in my room at the Benedick, Frank (himself always elegant, aristocratic) watched me dress, that evening. Alas, it was not until that memorable evening was half spent that I discovered, horribly, the cause of his satanic mirth. It was my wearing, unwittingly, over evening trousers and waistcoat—a cutaway coat!

A symbolic act, it must have been, directed by the same subconscious asteistic sprite in me which refuses to take anything too seriously, and has just tangled even the dignity of this salutatory. And, since we shall all be psycho-analyzed anyway, and our secrets probed, I may venture as an excuse for lack of sobriety the demoralizing effect upon an editor of so rich and bizarre a display of solecisms, *clichés* and astigmatic English in the copy of noted authors whose diction must of course be held sacrosanct. Selah.

In this book are the fact-stories of 125 of the busiest men and women in the United States. To have collected so many gratuitous contributions testifies perhaps less to the persistence of two years of correspondence and entreaty than to the worthiness of the cause for which the book is published.

INTRODUCTION

The activities of the Authors' League Fund are too little known, however, even to members of the League. Its benevolence and encouragement, though large and continuous, must of necessity remain of a confidential nature. But to those aware of the friendly help it has given many of our fellow authors in time of trouble, it is a work which should have the cordial and regular support of every professional writer, whether a member of the League or not. It offers an opportunity for the finest spirit of craft fellowship.

Indeed, perhaps one of the secrets of the success of this collection is revealed in the words of more than one contributor, who has breathed a jocosely plaintive fear that he himself may, some time, be forced to knock at the charitable door of the Fund. A precarious business, the literary profession. Names, well-known names—they rise, they fall—disappear. If an author doesn't quit writing because he can no longer sell his work, he is likely to cease because he doesn't have to, any longer. It is the latter reason that accounts for the presence in these pages of stories by retired litterateurs—gentlemen farmers, bankers, and coupon-cutters of sorts.

Of course, unfortunately, many authors—prominent authors, even—are unrepresented in this symposium. Too many, through a lamentable neglect, a lack of editorial perspicacity, or the failure of the mails, have perhaps never received the editor's request to help fill the book. But the list as it stands is fairly representative of American Letters. It contains an unusually large percentage of our good and great—of our best advertised, at any rate. For who are good, and who are great, in these latter years of monstrous circulations? Would that some hard determinist might invent a method of forecasting the weather of literature appreciation! *Moi*, the only way I can express my opinion is to adapt the remark of a friend of mine, on his first visit to New York—a truly masterly description of the effect upon him of the downtown skyscrapers.

INTRODUCTION

"Why, Frank," said he, "When I look up at those tremendous great tall buildings, by god, Frank, it makes me wish they were ten times taller!"

As a collection of the confessions of—dare I say literary celebrities?—or, at least, Who's Whosers—and I do dare say at least, that few such collections have ever been sucher—it is a remarkable and stimulating demonstration of candor. It might even be appraised as a valuable contribution to the history of our contemporaneous American literature. And from these humble beginnings on the road to Fame will doubtless be drawn innumerable moral precepts to inspire—or bore—the ambitious neophyte.

To the literary beginner of today this volume will be, it is to be hoped, an encouragement. Surely so many famous story-tellers have had to submit their first work so many times before acceptance, that their example points clearly the lesson of persistence. There are exceptions, to be sure, where the road to success was amazingly easy, and the first rewards brilliant. But if some few have escaped the *Sturm* and especially the *Drang* of early struggles, the tyro may still cling to Emerson's law of compensation and trust that those who cheated hardship at the start with prize stories and editorial adulation, may yet be reached by an equalizing fate. They may live, for instance, to see the children of their fancy butchered by the motion picture continuity-writer.

And as for prize winning—(this as priest to novitiate)—well, there was once a magazine of immense circulation, published in Boston, which offered a tremendous prize for the best short story. And after the jaded readers, half-crazed with the perusal of thousands and thousands of mediocre manuscripts, had become almost comatose, their critical faculties paralyzed, their minds dulled, reading on, reading on, to find the needle in that literary haystack, one at last aroused from his lethargy and cried, "Here's one with a good title—'Mother.'"

INTRODUCTION

"Hell! Give it to 'Mother,' " cried they all, with a groan of relief.

And to "Mother" the prize was given. And for two years thereafter the author of "Mother" wrote in to the Y——— I mean that magazine, to ask why her prize winning story hadn't been printed. It never was!

Fortunate was it for most of our 125, no doubt, that their early work never saw the printed page. "*Pray that thy dreams come true,*" says Muriel Strode, "*yet O, thou shalt pray well if thou shalt pray for deferred fulfillment.*" For nothing so fixes faults, hampers growth, more than reward that comes too soon. The ill-favored girl with brains, usually perfects herself in the use of so many weapons that she can vanquish the beauty who has but one. But the subject is too controversial for an editor to discuss. Let us leave it to be threshed out between those who believe *Poeta nascitur non fit*—who believe their first work best—who boast that they "never have changed a word"—and those who regard writing as a trade only to be learned through hard apprenticeship—the braggarts of the other side, miracles of pertinacity (or of obreption) who "rewrite a hundred times."

The unexpected discovery of so many rivals of Daisy Ashford was, at first, somewhat of an embarrassment to the editor. A disturbing threat it was that the book might, after all, turn out to be a mere compendium of juvenilia. To be sure, the evidence of so prolific an army of precocities might at least settle the moot question of the veracity of Daisy's authorship. The adduced evidence, in fact, shows that along with whooping-cough and the measles, the divine cacoethes might well be classed as a children's disease in America.

But alas, as a rule (since the early MSS of A. D. M. is not forthcoming in rebuttal), our literary infant prodigies have not that subtle trick of naïf suggestiveness which made the young English authoress (and here at last, we arrive, perhaps at the only proper use of that contemned term)—

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where was I?—Oh, yes!—made “The Young Visitors” so sprightly and refreshing. We have all taken our Muse, even when tragic, *au grand serieux* as one to be respected according to the canons of mid-Victorian—or let us, as 100%, say, rather, Polkian propriety. Normal pre-adolescence is indubitably, the true Epoch of Sensibility.

And so, when little Rupert essays the ethical, and young Geordie the didactic, we cannot but feel that although time may not have improved their morals, their art has considerably mellowed with maturity. Those who made no attempt to uplift, but attacked the frankly melodramatic, felt the truer urgency. It would have been pleasant indeed to have included the original texts of such tales as “Panther Jim’s Revenge,” and “A Trip to the Moon,” or even “Aliris.” But then, so many of our most popular present-growth novels are melodramas of merely greater length, ambition and complexity, the avid reader, whose taste has here been whetted, must be referred to his favorite writer’s currently published Old-Maiden Efforts.

Do flappers and he-goslings write today? It is an age of precocious sophistication, but less seldom than of yore, I ween, does it take form in art. When our 125 were children, you know, it was the age of amateur journalism. Boys had printing presses, young girls read romances, wrote poetry. Now they play with automobiles, aeroplanes and wireless telephony. They prate of inside baseball and athletic records, or flirt with lipsticks and sex problems. Verily, in the city, at least, the home, as a culture centre is almost extinct. The movies and the magazines nowadays seem to do most children’s thinking for them.

Yet, on the other hand, the very multiplicity of these magazines and movies have so increased the demand for material that the way to success is far easier than it was twenty-five years ago—to financial success, at least. The first dollar bill, or the first check, I fancy, is seldom framed by the young author of this year 1921.

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Quick work—big profits! Is that to be the slogan of the author of tomorrow? It was not like that in the olden time! In the days here recorded the publication of a story by an unknown author in a popular magazine was not followed within two days of issuance by magnificent telegraphed offers for motion picture rights. Writers then climbed a long and painful ladder to fame. Now they take the elevators. But still, elevators, you know, seldom reach the roof where Fame sits in view of the world. They stop only at financial landings. And the result is too evident. Mr. George Horace Lorimer accuses seven out of ten formerly conscientious and painstaking story writers of now writing so obviously for the movies that the scenario, yes, even to cut-backs, is as visible in their tales as the bones in an X-ray print. It may well be that those who get rich so quickly nowayears will find their names writ in a medium as evanescent as water. Where are the motion pictures of yester year?

Who ever, though, anticipated that literature would become a gambling device—that the by-product would outsell the primary work? Certainly not one of these 125 who were so well pleased with eighty dollars pay for three weeks hard work! What rights, then, are still to be developed? What gorgeous pay will our grand-children receive? Audition royalties from super phonographs—or serial rights in Mars?

Sooth to say, the payment authors receive is funny money. I once told Mr. Henry James that I received from the *Chap Book* twenty dollars for reviewing my first book—and eight dollars more for protesting against the ignorance and prejudice of my reviewer. And sadly, bitterly, he told me the secret of "What Maysie Knew."

Would you believe that for that sublime piece of psychology he received, for serial and book rights, only \$150? It shows how the artist regarded his work in ante cinemadays. So absorbed was he with the theme that, notwithstanding the fact that he had contracted to write, for that absurd

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honorarium, merely one short story, he spun it out, chapter after chapter to its logical and fascinating end.

But there was, as usual, another side to the affair. The *Chap Book* eschewed serials at that time, and the last thing it wanted was a serial by so esoteric a writer as Henry James. But on the installments kept coming, on and on, forever. And at last, to get even, Mr. Herbert Stone informed me, he had to publish the book!

It is to the psychologist, so-called—in plain old-fashioned English, the student of human nature—that these pages will prove, no doubt, to be the most attractive and affording feast. They form a series of intellectual autographs fascinating to contemplate. "My Maiden Effort," to the *cognoscenti* will probably be regarded as a comedy. Never, of course does a person reveal himself with such naïveté as when talking about himself—yes, even when he is lying. But to get the full flavor of these personalities, the book should not be studied chapter by chapter, but devoured at a gulp. You taste the roast, you know, better after the punch. Even water is sweeter after artichokes. And so the dominant traits of these penitents should have the constant spice of contrast.

The temptation, therefore, so to order the confessions as to present complimentary colors in juxtaposition—the inferiority complex next to a case of megalomania, inhibition near extraversion,—was keen. But it was firmly resisted. In point of fact, the accidental antitheses provided by a democratic alphabetical sequence luckily made it unnecessary for the editor to adopt any more deliberately cruel and revealing arrangement. You have only to turn any page to go from red to green.

What the analytic, sociological mind, academically trained, could and perhaps will do with this information in the way of statistics, percentages and tendencies, is another distressing question. What general conclusions will be drawn regarding American Authorship in its beginnings? God knows—and the professors. Should we encourage kidoid scribbling, or apply the back of a hair brush? Which is the more in-

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dicative of lasting fame—to pay to have your own book published, or to have it welcomed by the first publisher? To have one's first book burned and have to laboriously rewrite it, or to find it spinning itself into a yarn without conscious effort by the author—which predicts immortality? And, when it comes right down to it, how many immortals have we, in our 125, anyhow?

Ask any one of them, almost, and no doubt his answer will be like a comment I once heard at the National Liberal Club, in London. I was calling on Harold Frederic that day. He was entertaining one after another visitor, drinking varicolored drinks and playing pool the while. Now, at opposite ends of that billiard room were two authors, forming the most striking literary contrast that could well be imagined. Charlie Hoyt, author of "A Hole in the Ground," and other famous outrageous farces—and Maurice Maeterlinck, of whom (ignorant of the fact that the gentleman beside him was Alfred Sutro), I had just been asking, "*Comment trouvez-vous vos traductions en anglais?*"

And it came to pass that Hoyt looked across at the Belgian poet. Looked long and thoughtfully—dreamily. Then, finally, he remarked, with that inimitable New England drawl of his, "You know, I don't think much of that man's plays." And as his eyes came back to mine with a shrewd gleam, he added, "But I guess I like 'em about as well as he likes mine!"

Again, what environment is best for the budding genius? The well-selected, well-filled library of L. W. D.; or M. A.'s lonely desert? Shall we educate our future great writer in the law, in medicine, or civil engineering? Or simply trust blindly that he may resist or outgrow the simian mimetic suggestions of a classic course in numbered English? Well, each author, you will see, answers from his own experience, and finds his own training best. And so no doubt it was—for him. Still, one thing at least seems to be proved for this generation. Pedagogics may have improved since 1895, and a way may be discovered in the future to teach an art by

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rules; but no one in this list at least has attributed his success to one of those "How to Write a Short Story" courses conducted by instructors who have never written a good one.

More than that. I think almost every one of these 125 successful writers will agree that the fatuity of the attempt to teach story-writing is not so much the inadequate or mistaken methods of instruction, as the fact that such courses do not attract the few who are to become real authors. The systematized method appeals mainly to the many who mistake desire for talent. Those who have the sacred creative spark can seldom endure to learn of schools. No, we believed in the "call," and that each must work out his own originality alone.

Alone. Ah yes, so separately, in fact, that never, even within the Authors' League does one hear talk of art. Not even of technique, nor method, nor style. We have the aesthetic reticence of Englishmen with regard to their emotions. Why, wasn't it Rupert Hughes who said that the Council of the Authors' League consisted of intimate friends who had not one of them ever read another's books?

And so, although this book should really be dedicated to the aspirants in the field of letters—the new generation to tend the sacred shrine—I cannot help hoping that it may serve, too, to introduce, some of these 125 lonely souls to each other. May they awake and realize that the writers here represented are not merely men and women, but authors whose work should be recognized, even if only in their Maiden Efforts!

August 1st, 1921.

GELETT BURGESS.

NOTE: Acknowledgment should be made of the courtesy of *T. P.'s Weekly* for permission to reprint the stories of K. D. W. and R. Le G., of *The Bookman* for the use of J. H.'s and W. A. W.'s articles, and of *The Saturday Evening Post*—I think it was—some name like that—for the confession of J. D. D.

Also thanks are due to Mr. C. W. Burkett for his assistance in reading the proofs of this book.

And now if you believe in the Fund, buy copies for all your friends!

MY MAIDEN EFFORT

SAMUEL HOPKINS ADAMS

Maiden effort? If by that term is indicated one's first commercial or productive, in other words professional attempt, mine was a Poem of Passion. Not my own, but another's passion; chaste, discreet and, as I recall it, unrequited, though that is perhaps irrelevant. What is germane to the present issue is that my own essay was requited in the sum of three dollars, which subsequently turned out a loss.

As a Sophomore at Hamilton College I had contributed various fugitive verse to the *Lit.* I had a friend and classmate whom I will charitably shroud under the name of Chauncey (he has since become a prosperous manufacturer of sandpaper or something equally utile and would not, I am sure, go a-vagrating in the paths of poesy, even in his advertising) and who was deeply enamored of an attractive maiden in the neighboring city of Utica. One evening he came to my room looking secret, care-worn, and self-conscious.

"What's got into you to be writing all that guff for the *Lit?*" he began.

"Oh, I don't know," said I, loath to claim the divine afflatus before this crass and unsympathetic soul.

"Don't get anything out of it, do you?" was his next query.

"No."

"Well—how would you like to?"

I stared at him, uncomprehending. After sundry mental wiggings and writhings, he came out with his proposal. I was to indite, for spot cash, a poem to be sent to his inamorata, who was of a sentimental and literary inclination—as his own. Two considerations impelled to accept. First,

I was particularly hard up in my Sophomore year (also, for that matter, in my Freshman, Junior and Senior years); second, I already had my hand in, as I had decided to enter the lists of the Prize Poem Contest just established by Clinton Scollard—first prize, \$10; second prize, \$5.

"All right," I agreed. "I'll do it. What'll you give me?"

"A dollar," replied Chauncey, with empressment.

"Come off!" I retorted. "Five, or I won't stir a pen."

"Who d'you think you are? E. P. Roe?" he demanded, indignantly. "I'll tell you now; make it a hummer and I'll raise it to two bones."

A long and embittering contest followed, but I stuck out so staunchly for the rewards of Calliope that he finally met me on the compromise ground of three dollars, one-third down, the balance upon acceptance.

There was no trouble about the acceptance; he admitted himself quite satisfied with the finished product, over which I sat up most of that night; though I cannot confidently say as much of the innamorata, who subsequently married a minister. And, indeed, he got his full money's worth in eleven stanzas, which I should be glad to reproduce here but for lack of space. Having relieved my soul of this commercial burden, I set hopefully about concluding my own masterpiece for the competition.

Having copied the precious eleven stanzas twice, on account of his initial experiment being afflicted with blots, Chauncey went to Utica over Sunday to deliver them to the lady of his heart, carelessly leaving the maculated copy on his desk where it was discovered by his room-mate. Room-mate (one of those infernally helpful souls!) read, admired and, with discriminating taste and practical application thereof, entered the manuscript in the Prize Poem Contest as Chauncey's.

Exit Poesy; enter Tragedy.

The three-dollar poem took the ten-dollar first prize. My own hopeful offering, which would otherwise have been the winner, was relegated to second place, with an honorarium of only five dollars. Thus the account stood

CREDIT	DEBIT
To one hired poem. .\$.3.00	To one lost first prize. \$10.00
To one second prize. 5.00	Total \$10.00
	— 8.00
Total \$8.00	
LOSS on transaction. \$2.00	

Throughout my subsequent literary career I have been striving to catch up with that heart-breaking deficit.

I have never quite succeeded.

GEORGE ADE

At the age of fifteen, in 1881, I broke into print. The essay which I read before our "literary" society was commended to the local editor by the school superintendent and that is how I became a contributor. Before that time I had loafed around the printing offices and brought in news items; but "A Basket of Potatoes" was the first effort which had the size and the smug pretention of a real effort.

Today I have read the thing over again for the first time in many, many years. One of my esteemed relatives had it put away in a scrap book. It seems that when I was fifteen years old I knew life in its serious aspects more deeply than I know it now, at the age of fifty-four. The essay was a ponderous affair. I held my head and moralized all the time I was writing it. I knew all about the benefits of "education" and the horrors of "intemperance." I was sure of almost anything. Following is the whole thing as printed in the *Gazette* paper of Kentland, Indiana, some time in November, 1881:

A BASKET OF POTATOES.

A very common subject, and one on which it would seem as if little could be said. Just a common basket of potatoes, composed of large potatoes, small potatoes and medium-sized potatoes. And yet by this basket of potatoes we can illustrate the great problem of suc-

cess in life, of how men rise to the top of the ladder, and why men stay at the bottom and why men can never rise to high places. Now let us begin our investigations. Here is a bushel basket and here is a bushel of potatoes. We pour the potatoes into the basket and now we will make our first comparison or supposition.

Each one of these potatoes is a young man not yet entered on his life's great work. The large potatoes are large minded, large hearted, honest young men. The small potatoes are small minded, small hearted, mean, dishonest young men. The medium potatoes are a mixture of the good and bad. As we have them now the large ones and small ones are mixed all over the basket. There are large ones at the bottom and small ones at the top and *vice versa*. Now let the battle of life begin. Let these young men be put upon a level footing and be put face to face with the stern realities of life. We will illustrate this with the basket of potatoes by lifting it up and jolting and shaking and tipping it very thoroughly for some time, and then when we stop we find to our surprise that the small potatoes have gone to the bottom and the large potatoes have gone to the top, while the medium-sized have stopped in the center and do not seem to go either way.

Friends, remember this; in the tough, earnest battle of life the big potatoes will go to the top and the small ones will go to the bottom. There are few rules which have no exceptions and it is thus with this rule, for here right on the top of the basket we find a small potato and we are puzzled accordingly, but it is soon clear, for upon investigation we find that it is held in its place by two large ones and from this we draw a conclusion: "Whenever you see a small potato in the top of the basket, somebody's holding it there."

And there are several other exceptions, for down in the bottom of the basket we find several large ones and again we are mystified, but it soon clears away and we know the cause when we discover projecting from

each one several large knots or projections; and in order that these potatoes may have a fair chance we break off these knots and discover that the most common knot is intemperance. The others are love of gain, inactivity and several other bad habits. And from this we draw the conclusion that if we would rise to the top we must break off our bad habits and vices and be as big potatoes as possible.

What is true in one case is true in another and we find that small potatoes are kept on top by these projections and when these are examined we find that smooth tongues and lying words have put them on the level of the big potatoes.

And now we have everything fixed to our satisfaction, and are satisfied with our examinations, we casually pick up the largest potato in the basket and look at it and discover something which we had not before noticed, viz—a large rotten spot in the otherwise solid body. And from this we draw the conclusion that even the big potatoes are not all perfect and man is apt to be sinful in spite of everything. And so it is everywhere; life is but a basket of potatoes. When the hard jolts come the big will rise and the small will fall. The true, the honest and the brave will go to the top. The small minded and ignorant must go to the bottom.

And now I would like to say something to these young potatoes. Now is the time for you to say whether or not in the battle of life you will be a small or large potato. If you would be a large potato get education, be honest, observing and careful and you will be jolted to the top. If you would be a small potato neglect these things and you will get to the bottom of your own accord. Break off your bad habits, keep away from rotten potatoes and you will get to the top. Be careless of these things and you will reach the bottom in due time. Everything rests with you. Prepare for the jolting.

JAMES LANE ALLEN

Back in those tidal years of our native fiction when Henry James and William Dean Howells appeared as riding on the crest of the one national wave and everyone else as wallowing or drowning around them in the trough of the sea—with three or four monthly American magazines as the lonely lighthouses of their hope or their despair—back in those surging years there one day fell into my hands by some unremembered chance a copy of Mr. James's brilliant and provocative novel, "The Portrait of a Lady."

I was teaching in the University at Lexington, Kentucky, at the time; among other subjects, teaching English. That is, true to pedagogic type and temper, thumb and thumb-screw, I was, as a salaried official of education, engaged in painfully making known to classes of rapidly growing but perhaps of not quite so rapidly learning young Americans, what the English language is and how the English language should be written. This major operation—performed then, as it everywhere usually is, at a minor desk—involved the demonstration of how bad has been the English sometimes underwritten by the great, even by the greatest; and a triumph of the entire method lay in stretching an immortal as a *corpus delicti* on the dissecting table before the student body for the extremely impressive exposure of his extremely unimpressive faults.

It was altogether in the pedagogic nature of things, therefore, when one night I entered upon the reading of Mr. James's novel, for me to discover on the first page that I did not approve of the way in which the author had written it. Not a line of fiction had I ever written; but the fact in no wise interfered with the conviction that Mr. James with his genius, art, care, and experience combined, had not opened his novel quite so well as I could have opened it myself. Putting pen to paper, I forthwith demonstrated how imperfect as a piece of literary art Mr. James's opening was, entitled my derisive, destructive essay "The First Page

of 'The Portrait of a Lady,' " and dropped my improvement into the mail.

There flourished in the New York City of the period a literary weekly whose peculiar claim it was to offer its readers only such reviews as were prepared by expert authority. Perhaps its occasional activity might be described as that of fostering the criticism of distinguished attack. I regularly read this aggressive periodical, and to it naturally forwarded my distinguished attack on Mr. James. Promptly there reached me from the editorial office an acceptance and a check.

The first thing that I had ever written and offered for publication had been accepted, paid for! Mr. James was a resounding name on that vast, mountainous upland of letters. I had successfully attacked him. He would read my article and be thunderstruck. Mr. Howells would read it and secretly, quickly, tighten the screws on all *his* first pages. Mr. James's publishers would read it and look at one another with blank faces, upset, uneasy. The regular reviewers of Mr. James's books would disparage me, envious that they had been less keen or less courageous. My friends would read it and say: "This is what I have always known you were destined for!" Whoever opened the pages of that austere and occasionally brutal periodical would encounter the article as its opening essay and bring his eyes to rest upon a new name, never before printed.

With all this glorious young summer of imaginary success within me there took shape in my imagination and sympathies a sequence of verses to picture the contending spirits of joy confronted in nature always by suffering, life chased by death.

I hunted up a little printing shop, chose from the printer's stock his finest paper, chose from his assortment the fittest type, and had him bestow upon my verses the finality and perpetuity of a stray leaf from an imaginary volume of much read poems—a method and a solace well known always to poets of the unpublished. I sent my stray leaf of perpetuity to the editor of *Harper's Magazine*, not knowing who he

was, and from the editor of *Harper's Magazine* I promptly received an acceptance and a check.

More had come, far more, than that. There had come the opening of a pathway, and in that pathway I was henceforth to walk as my road of life, lead whither and how it would—a country bypath: at one end in certain green pastures I, native to them; at the other end, seated beside a great highway of the world and looking at me out of its dust and din—quite suddenly and unexpectedly looking at me with recognition of the first stroke of creative work—Henry Mills Alden.

As soon as possible I took that pathway straight toward him. He had accepted my first verses; he accepted my first short story; he told me, upon examination of several pieces of my work, that what I lacked was the discovery of a definite field; he gave me in complete trust my first commission for an illustrated article on "The Bluegrass Region of Kentucky"; and now looking backward upon the men who variously influenced my course in those first groping and rather baffled years, I see him as the one who, with a sign to me, walked to an unseen gate, pushed it open, and pointed to onward road.

GERTRUDE ATHERTON

My highly respected editor insists that I tell the public the story of my first literary crime, and although egotism of any sort seems out of place these days, there is only one way of unfastening his tentacles. So here goes, for what it is worth.

I heard much during my girlhood of a certain Nelly Gordon, whose father's estate was on the present site of the Stanford University at Palo Alto, California.

My mother had known her when she was a brilliant figure in San Francisco society, but she had long since disappeared from that sacrosanct Ark, and was only men-

tioned with bated breath when the heroine of some new scandal. She was drinking herself to death and her other indiscretions were many.

After I married I heard more of her, as my father-in-law's country place was near the Gordon estate, and my sisters-in-law had been very intimate with her; they told me that once, in her girlhood, her distracted father had sent Nelly to stay with them for a year in order to get her away from her mother, a thoroughly depraved woman, who had been an English barmaid in her youth. Mrs. Gordon, however, sent her bottles of whiskey with her laundry, and no precautions availed. She was a beautiful gifted creature, but had drawn in the desire to drink with her mother's milk, and Mrs. Gordon, whose ignorant mind was concentrated upon hatred of her gentleman husband, taught the child to like whiskey as a sure means of revenge upon the man who idolized his daughter and scorned herself.

Although stories were always simmering in my mind, I married before my schooldays were finished, and had no time for several years after to think of writing. To read was all I could accomplish. One day, however, long after Nelly Gordon's death, I read a sad little article in a local paper. Someone, during the protracted settlement of the Gordon estate, had come upon an old trunk and sent it to the auction room. It contained Nelly's wedding finery, including tiny satin slippers, two old albums, trinkets, plate, and Mr. Gordon's Crimean War Medal. A good many people rushed to the sale as they were anxious to get their old photographs, some of them taken with Nelly Gordon, before the press got hold of them. The man who wrote the article gave a graphic account of the auction and went into some details of Nelly Gordon's tragic history.

This roused my interest to such an extent that I "felt" a story and went over at once to the house of one of my sisters-in-law, and asked her advice.

"It would make a wonderful story," she replied, "and I

will tell you the details." This she did, including one dramatic scene. I went home and wrote the story with enthusiasm.

My husband, who had been one of the young bloods of his day, was with Nelly Gordon when she died, and gave me a graphic description of that sordid and terrible end of one of the most notable figures in the early history of San Francisco. After it was finished I told a very eminent lawyer, who had had charge of the Gordon estate, what I had done, and he said it was high time some one should make a novel out of that picturesque story.

Being very callow, and having recently read an essay of Robert Louis Stevenson on Alliteration and Assonance, I called the story "The Randolphs of Redwoods."

I took it to the San Francisco *Argonaut* and the editor accepted it promptly, although with a cynical smile that I did not interpret until later. Nor did I understand why he so readily agreed to publish it anonymously. I wanted the fun of hearing it discussed, and then announce the authorship with a flourish of trumpets.

Well, it was some years before I announced the authorship of that story. Never before nor since has anything written created such a hullabaloo in San Francisco as that wildest of all wild maiden efforts. With the ignorant audacity of youth I had "put in" nearly every man and woman of note of an earlier generation, under disguises as transparent as moonshine, and made them do and say things that caused their respectable gray hairs to stand straight up during the six weeks the story ran its course. Moreover, knowing nothing whatever of the world—I had not even been a "young lady" and my husband kept me almost literally in the middle of a wood—I turned myself loose when it came to love scenes, and my imagination took away what little breath was left in an outraged public.

The curious part of it was that no one for a moment suspected me.

I had never written anything for publication but a few pedantic little homilies in the *Argonaut*, and I was too young to have known the story of Nelly Gordon at first hand; the public was convinced that some sinner who was young in the times depicted had done the awful deed, and one respectable citizen after another was cut dead. Even my sister-in-law, who had given me the details when I told her it was my intention to write the story, accused everybody else, and was in a state of suppressed fury all the time it was running. Even the lawyer did not suspect me although I had told him I had written and sent it in. But when I met him on the train he could talk of nothing else. I had many uncomfortable moments over his caustic observations, but the climax was reached one day when he shook his head with a grimly reminiscent smile, and said, "I tell you the fellow who wrote that carriage scene had been there himself!"

One may imagine my husband's feelings.

He was an amiable man as a rule but during some three months domestic peace was obscured in one corner of Fair Oaks. He was in mortal terror that the authorship would leak out, and this was one reason why I held my peace. As a matter of fact it was several years before the authorship of that all too truthful tale ceased to come up at the dinner tables where one or more of the old guard were gathered together.

When it did come out—I finally announced it—the lawyer, who had for years taken a consuming interest in my mental development, ceased to speak to me, and I doubt if my sister-in-law ever forgave me. But I had had an immense time and was willing to stand the consequence.

Some years later—it was in 1895, I think—I rewrote the story, expanded it into a novel, gave it a mortal hero, toned down its callow recklessness, and published it under the title of "A Daughter of the Vine."

MARY AUSTIN

I have just one recollection of the process by which I learned to read and write, which, according to family tradition, occurred when I was between four and five years of age, without any other aid than might have been furnished by a brother two years older. I can recall having trouble with my reading, and asking to have passages which I had imperfectly apprehended read aloud to me, but of the process of learning to write not a scrap remains. That I could do both, for my own pleasure, by the time I was admitted to school at the age of six, is pricked upon my mind by an event that illuminates the educational methods of that day.

It had never occurred to me to tell, nor the teacher to ask, if I could read, so I was entered in the "chart class" and for weeks stood up with the others and recited a-b, ab, b-o, bo.

To relieve the boredom of the hours between recitations I smuggled a book under my desk and read. But, being one day absorbed to the point of missing my class, I was obliged to admit that I had been reading, and was made to stand on the floor for having told a lie, since it was obvious that being only in the chart class I could not read. I bore this very well so long as there were only my fellow pupils present, but when the principal entered on his daily round, I was provoked to protest in my own defence. He must have been a good principal for that time, for he promptly put the matter to a test and discovered that I could read very well. He promoted me on the spot to the next room.

I have a very definite impression of myself, a small, gawky girl, burdened with my school belongings, my hood and cloak and my tin lunch bucket, under the hostile eyes of half a hundred children two or three years older than myself, who felt their dignity as second and third graders assailed by my intrusion among them. I mention it here because the partial isolation which resulted from their atti-

tude drove me rather earlier than might otherwise have happened to the solace of writing.

At first it was only sentences, possibly incomplete phrases, always written separately on little slips of paper which I kept rolled up like cigarettes and used to secrete in various places about the house. They were immensely precious and important to me, but they must also have been childishly absurd, because it was the delight of my family to rout them out of their hiding places and read them aloud to one another and especially to company. I can recall the rage of violated privacy into which these occasions always threw me as the most poignant emotion of my childhood. I have often suspected that this early experience has something to do with my still active and not always successful resistance to editorial interference with my later work.

My first organized piece of writing was in verse and called by me "A Play To Be Sung." That was because, being brought up on the outskirts of a mid-Western town, and a Methodist to boot, I had never heard that plays to be sung were usually called operas. Up to my sixteenth year I had never seen any kind of stage performance except a Sunday School entertainment, so I have no idea where this libretto of mine came from. My memory of it is distinctly of a thing seen, people in a closed in space, moving about and singing to one another, where they might be expected to talk.

The only way in which I can account for it is as something I had heard read aloud. My father had several years of invalidism, during which it was my mother's custom to read him to sleep. Though I was often caught and punished for it, I could seldom resist creeping out of my own bed and huddling just outside the door to listen, dropping asleep myself occasionally and being spanked awake as I was put back to bed.

I wrote High School notes for the local paper, of course, and nearly all my seat-mate's compositions as well as my own and some of my brother's. I wrote for my College paper and, when I was twenty, I wrote two short stories.

I recall that after having paid to have them typewritten my husband mislaid one of the manuscripts, the original copy of which had been destroyed. The other I sent to *The Overland Monthly*, the editor of which wrote me that he would like to publish my story but that he could not pay for it as Eastern magazines paid. I replied that he could pay me whatever he was accustomed to pay, which turned out to be nothing at all. Two years later, while moving and settling in another house, the lost manuscript came to light among some papers of my husband's. *The Overland* was having a short-story prize contest then, so mine was submitted. I never heard from it officially, but after a year or so I ran across it in the pages of *The Overland*.

These experiences discouraged me from sending out manuscript and indeed I finished almost nothing during the next six or seven years while I was occupied with my house and my baby. One story was sent to *The Black Cat* by my husband, who thought it would please me to see it in print, which it did. But when about 1900 I began seriously to devote myself to a writing career, I made a list of the magazines for which I meant to write in the order of their literary excellence, with *The Atlantic Monthly* at the top.

Accordingly, I sent them my first story, which was accepted and paid for magnificently, as I thought, with a check for thirty-five dollars. There were two or three other short stories, if I remember rightly, variously placed, and then all at once, in the period of convalescence after an illness, I wrote "The Land of Little Rain."

To understand what the writing of this, my maiden book, meant to me, you must realize that up to that time, and for many years afterwards, I was living in a California town of about three hundred inhabitants, and, with the exception of the middle Western college town of about six thousand, it was the only kind of town I had ever known. I had seen but two plays, both of them without the knowledge of my parents. I had never seen an opera, nor a good picture, nor heard any good music. There was no library in the town,

not many books of any sort. Happily, I did not know enough to know that this was not the atmosphere out of which books were supposed to be written. I confidently expected to produce books. For twelve years I had lived deeply and absorbedly in the life of the desert.

I was languid with convalescence, I was lonely; and quite suddenly I began to write. I began at the beginning, and, with an interval of months for another illness, wrote straight to the end, practically without erasures or revisions. I remember the day very well—one of those thin days when the stark energies of the land threaten just under its surfaces, the mountains march nakedly, the hills confer. The air was so still that one could feel, almost hear, the steady pulse of the stamp-mill away East under the Inyo. There was a weeping willow whose long branches moved back and forth across my window like blowing hair, like my memory of my mother's long and beautiful hair. I think it was this which gave the reminiscent touch to my mood. For though I was there in the midst of it, I began to write of the land of little rain as of something very much loved, now removed. As I wrote, two tall, invisible presences came and stood on either side.

I don't know now what these presences were . . . are. For two or three years, until I moved away from that country, in fact, they were present when I wrote. Sometimes, I felt them call me to my desk—sometimes I summoned them. I suppose they were projections out of my loneliness, reabsorbed into the subconsciousness when the need of them was past. Though I could never quite see them, almost but not quite, and it is years since they have been present to the outward sense, I am still occasionally aware of them inside of me.

"The Land of Little Rain" was promptly accepted by Houghton Mifflin Company and published serially in *The Atlantic* before appearing in book form. It had an instant success of esteem and is still selling creditably, enough to warrant, even in this year of high cost production, a popular edition.

And now it is time to make a confession concerning my first book, which might have been made earlier if I had been able to make up my mind whether the joke about it is on me or on the public.

The book had been much praised for its style. Nothing was further from my mind when I was writing it. I had never exchanged a dozen words with anybody on the question of style, nor thought of it as being a writer's problem. What I did think was that the kind of people who could have enjoyed my country as I enjoyed it probably had a different medium of communication from that employed at Lone Pine. When I wrote I tried always to write the way I supposed highly cultivated people talked to one another. I knew it was not the way my neighbors talked because everybody, even the young woman who did my typewriting, corrected my diction and my phraseology. "It sounded so queer," she would cheerfully explain her alterations of my text. Even my husband would offer to correct my proof so as to bring it within the local range, and the village school-teacher would tactfully send me copies of the magazines containing my articles, with penciled suggestions of her own. But I stuck to my original conception of the proper form to be employed between me and the sort of people I hoped to reach.

So that's all there is to the question of my maiden style. I simply didn't know any better. I was astounded to the point of consternation when the reviews began to come in and I discovered that I was supposed to have "style." Since I did not know in the least how it had been achieved, I was always afraid of losing it. And now I am afraid I never shall. I know now that even members of the Poetry Society and the Authors' League do not talk to one another in that fashion, that they do not, in fact, talk very differently from the people in Lone Pine. But the final effect of my maiden experience as a writer has been to wish it onto me for life.

IRVING BACHELLER

I stole into the craft on my tip-toes as it were. I was scared to acknowledge that I entertained an ambition so extravagant. Indeed, in the House of Romance, I have felt more than once like a burglar, likely at any time to be arrested and thrust out. To help along, now and then, some fellow with a raised revolver wishes to know what business I have there. I don't let him bluff me any more, for I find that my rights are at least as good as his.

But in the days of my maiden effort I was plum scared. I worked rather stealthily on that thing Sundays and holidays. The family wondered what I was doing. They worried about me. Finally, out of a curious tangle of inserts and interlineations came a story in verse, founded on a legend of the countryside in which I was born. It was my first story. Bliss Carman accepted it for the *Independent* and praised it and I was very happy.

It was called "Whisperin' Bill." It was a poem of a dozen or more stanzas, and this is the way it began:

So ye're runnin' fer Congress, mister? Le'me tell ye
 'bout my son—
 Might make you fellers carefuller down there in
 Washington—
 He clings to his rifle an' uniform—folks call him
 Whisperin' Bill;
 An' I tell ye the war ain't over yit up here on Bow-
 man's Hill.

JOSEPHINE DASKAM BACON

I'm afraid I'm a little hazy about it. Oswald Villard says that the *Evening Post* sent me my first checks—but he says that about Job and Don Quixote and the Baron Munchausen and other authors too dead to contradict the *Post!* The editor of *St. Nicholas* says he was the man, and

invariably cites Mrs. Hodgson Burnett and Mr. Kipling as proof; and when I remind him that I was brought up on Lord Fauntleroy and never even knew how to pronounce Mowgli, he grumbles, "Well, you're all alike anyhow—we start you off, and then . . ."

As a matter of fact, I think I first lisped in numbers in *The Atlantic Monthly*, as a good New Englander should, and published a long poem there, while I was in school. In those days I was high-browed, and quite superior to a million-and-a-half guaranteed circulation.

Then, just as I was graduated, the *Century* offered a prize for the best essay, the best story and the best poem written by a recent graduate, and just before the competition closed I was bullied into writing for it by some anxious friends.

I have always loathed competitions of all sorts: they make me stubborn and sulky, and I think them idiotic. But it never occurred to me to do any less than the three, so I scoldingly turned off one of each, and dear Mr. Gilder once confided to me, years later, that he had voted for all three, and that two of them—the story and the poem—just missed winning the prizes.

They bought them both, however, and *The Atlantic Monthly* bought the essay, and I made more than the prize was worth.

A busy and versatile vice-president of those days (a certain Mr. Roosevelt) occupied many sheets of typewritten paper in a serious and detailed criticism of the essay—it was on the "Distinguishing Characteristics of American Poetry," or something like that—and I still have the friendly and amazing letter in which he gravely agrees or disagrees with each point in the thesis.

But I think my real breaking into print was when I broke in nationally, so to speak, with "The Madness of Philip."

Philip was the first wave of the flood of what is technically known as "child-stuff" that afterwards deluged the magazines, and Miss Viola Roseboro, who read the manu-

script for *McClure's Magazine*, has since assured me that she made it a rule, after that, to read every badly written long-hand manuscript that came into her hands—all for the sake of my naughty kindergarten baby!

I am solemnly assured by the experienced young women who toil up to the country to interview me for the *Saturday Evening Sun*, that I could have made a fortune had I stuck to child-stuff—but how dull it would have been! Like making collar-buttons, I should suppose.

Out of twenty-two books, I've never done but two that faintly resembled each other, either in style or subject—and they still want me to write for the *Saturday Evening Post*! (But there has to be an exception for every rule.)

Like everybody who has any real common sense or conscience, I suppose, I felt rather guilty at taking real money for what I wrote, but I suppose I decided that any healthy person who could sit still long enough to write, ought to be paid for it, and now I've grown used to the idea.

But I think that in our next incarnations we'll all be stokers or elevator boys or trick bicyclists or skirt-and-coat hands, or anything that requires a real technique!

RAY STANNARD BAKER

My maiden effort, as I now recall it, was twins. They saw the light of day while I was working, one long, dull winter, in a land office in North Wisconsin. I was twenty-two years old.

It had been a secret ambition of mine, ever since I could remember, to write. And here I was reading Blackstone's Commentaries and Anson on Contracts, trying to finish a law course. It bored me to death. One evening I resolved to stand it no longer, so I chucked Anson into a corner, buried Blackstone in a cupboard—and never opened either of them again.

That night I resolved to try my hand at writing—and sat down at once and began. The next evening I finished a

“poem”—and began on a short story, which I completed a couple of evenings later. These were the twins I spoke of.

I regarded them secretly as lusty and well-favored infants: but concealed their existence. I think I wanted them to burst full-orbed upon an astonished world.

Where should I have my masterpieces published? I considered that nothing but the best would do; and I even wondered if there were not something a little better than the best. I finally sent the “poem” to *Harpers’* and the story to *The Century*. I shall never forget the period of hot expectancy which followed.

It was exactly sixteen days (I counted ’em) when I got the letter from *Harpers’* and carried it with fast-beating heart back to my room. I had composed the cordial, congratulatory response of the editor in at least a dozen versions: I opened the envelope with trembling hands. My own “poem” fell out—with the cruelly polite, printed rejection slip, the first trickle of a flood that followed. It was a terrific blow, but it prepared me for the return of my story, a few days later, with a similar slip.

We used a wood stove in our office in those days. I opened the door and put both the poem and the story into the fire (where, I have no doubt, they belonged). For some weeks I was low in my mind, very low. And then, one day, it came over me suddenly: “By George, I had an idea in that story!”

That evening I re-wrote the story, finding strangely that some entirely new things came to me as I went along. An evening or two later I re-wrote the poem. The twins were alive again!

I sent them away to the editors of other magazines—with less hope to start with and less discouragement when they came back. I tried them all around—growing humbler and humbler. Finally, I sent the verses to a magazine then published at St. Paul—I think it was called *The Northwest Magazine*—and, to my astonishment and joy, I had a letter accepting them.

There was, however, a “but” in the letter: the magazine

was scarcely yet upon a paying basis and could not compensate me for my admirable, etc., etc., but would gladly place my name on the subscription list for one year. I jumped even at this and looked eagerly in the next number for my verses. They were not there. A month or two later this ingratiating young magazine gave up the ghost and never appeared again. My verses were evidently too much for it. It was thus that my career as a poet was ignominiously snuffed out.

The other twin, after many adventurous journeys, found lodgment with the editor of *Short Stories*. He would gladly take it and pay upon publication. *Pay, mind you!*

I hung around the news stands for the next number of *Short Stories*, and bought it eagerly. My story was not there. I tried to reason out my disappointment with myself. Printing took time: and perhaps they wanted to illustrate it! I must be reasonable. So I waited and pounced upon the next number. My name was not in it! I thought of writing to the editor, but I was afraid he might change his mind, repent his purpose of paying me, and send my precious story home again.

Month after month I repeated this anxious experience for two years and a half! And then, when hope had almost burned out, and, indeed, I had begun to write other things, the story was published, May, 1895. If that editor had printed my story two months after I sent it to him, I should have been his slave for life.

Yet it was not so bad, after all! There I was on the cover—with Anthony Hope and R. L. Stevenson. I was also in the table of contents: I was also on Page 50: "The Red Scarf, by Ray Stannard Baker, Copyrighted."

Remains one sad chapter! It was to be paid for upon publication; but the check failed to come. I had seen that check in my imagination scores of times and had spent it hundreds. I needed it in those days! It did not come.

I knew nothing of the methods of publishers and I was anxious not to offend my particular editor by reminding him of such an unpleasant subject as checks. He might

want another masterpiece of mine! But I finally wrote to him and after another delay received a reply with scarcely a word of apology in it. But that didn't matter. It contained a *check!* I could not look at that check for some time. It was well that I put off the fatal moment as long as I could. The Check was for Five Dollars!

When I had recovered consciousness I began to do a little calculating. I had bought *Short Stories* every month for two years and a half (I felt very loyal to my editor; I had a sense that it was, somehow, *my* magazine) and paid twenty-five cents each month; total, about seven dollars and a half. Credit five dollars for my story. Net loss, two dollars and a half.

But it was a real experience.

RALPH HENRY BARBOUR

Paraphrasing (Note to Editor: Don't make that "paraphrasing") the words of a famous artist, a check from an editor made me an author. If it hadn't been for the late H. C. Bunner, or, to be more exact, one of his hirelings, I would be today causing Childe Hassam and a lot more of them to gnash their teeth in envy. I think it likely that the person directly responsible for this loss to the Metropolitan Art Gallery is Harry Leon Wilson, who, at the far-distant time to which I refer, was, I believe, an assistant editor of *Puck*. I will not, however, come out flat-footed and lay the blame to him, for I am in the middle of one of his serials and consider that he has enough to answer for.

Suffice it to say that some one connected with *Puck* away back in the Dark Ages sent me a check for ONE DOLLAR. I write the words in capitals in a feeble effort to convey to the reader an idea of how big it looked to me. That simple event changed the whole current of my life.

Until that moment I was all set to become a famous artist, *var.*, landscape. I had the thin, pale face, and soulful eyes and vacant expression commonly found in incipient painters, and I was possessed of the typical aversion to

barbers. I owned a full assortment of pencils, brushes and paints and was well supplied with tracing-paper. I was remarkably clever with tracing-paper. In age I was, I think, fourteen when, into the Edenic innocence of my tender existence, came the Serpent in the guise of a slip of green paper.

Now all I had done to amass the fabulous fortune represented by that check was to write about four brief lines on a half-sheet of letter paper and, at the expense of a two-cent stamp, send it to the Editor of *Puck*. I am unable at this late day to quote the original quatrain accurately, but I believe that the following is near enough to show its idyllic charm and artless simplicity:

As down the garden path I go,
Caressed by April breezes,
I know that Spring has come with all
Its numerous diseases.

I am haunted by the impression that in the original form the first and third lines rhymed quite as perfectly as the second and fourth. If so, I was a better poet then than I am today, for I can't see now how I ever did it.

Naturally, that check opened up before my enraptured eyes a glowing vista entirely surrounded by oblongs of green paper. I figured that by working a mere twelve hours a day, at the age of thirty-five, when it was proper for all elderly men to retire from active pursuits, I'd be competing with John D. Rockefeller for the world's supply of crackers and milk.

At the instant I went over my computation for the fourth time and changed the last figure in the total, the world lost a great artist. Brushes and paints and tracing-paper were contumeliously cast aside and I launched myself on the Sea of Letters.

Vers de société led to nobler efforts in poesy; and from poesy, with the unconscious ease with which one passes from sore throat to diphtheria, I slipped into prose. By that time

I had completely worn out two rhyming dictionaries, which fact must serve for my excuse.

From the short story to the long story is but a step. I stepped. And since then I've kept stepping, if no higher, a darned sight further!

Today, although Mr. Rockefeller's supply of crackers has never been seriously interfered with by me, I have one compensation that never fails me. Any old day, if I happen to have the price, I can go to the art gallery and gaze pityingly at what I see there, happy in the knowledge that, had I pursued the path along which my faltering steps first led, some folks of whom I wot would be in the bread line today!

As I said before, I will not state positively that Harry Leon Wilson is personally to blame in this matter; but in case these lines should ever meet his eyes I add more in sorrow than in anger the words of the poet:

"You made me what I am today: I hope you're satisfied."

REX BEACH

"Maiden Effort" is not a good descriptive title for the first stuff I wrote. There was no effort connected with it, since I merely stole some ideas from my favorite authors and improved upon them.

I must have been about eleven years old when I committed my first plagiarism; anyhow I was attending public school in Florida or Illinois or somewhere. I attended some of the most exclusive public schools in both states as long as they could bear me. It was a so-called "composition," same being a part of the mental gymnastics connected with the elementary study of English. Pride in my first literary accomplishment induces me to leave off the prefix which the story deserved.

It was a modest little thing, done after the best style of Jules Verne. In it I led the breathless members of my class on a trip to the moon. Fair, for a beginner. I seem to remember that the teacher acknowledged that she had never read such a story. In justice to myself, however, I

must say that I rather showed up Jules as a piker and demonstrated what can really be accomplished by an unfettered imagination. Even to this day I somehow resent the fact that he was so unscrupulous as to plagiarize one of the best ideas I ever had, and before I was even born and had a chance to copyright it.

Years later I did a story or two for my college paper. Who I cribbed them from I can't remember, but they were patterned closely after the going style of popular fiction. They were gloomy, tragic—they had a punch, believe me.

Now a break in continuity—a row of asterisks denoting a lapse of time.

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I had returned from a dried-fruitful stay of about five years in Alaska and was undecided whether to take up law, life insurance or lime and cement as an occupation. One day I met a former Alaskan friend who informed me, with an offensive display of modesty, that he had become an author.

I was startled, incredulous, for I rather imagined that all authors were either dead or lived abroad. Truth to tell I had never thought much about the matter and while I realized that books had to be written in order to become books, I had an idea that magazines and newspapers just happened, like shoes or linen mesh underwear and such things. From hearsay I gathered that Kipling and Ella Wheeler Wilcox and Sherlock Holmes and Jack London were people of flesh and blood, but having seen nothing of late from the pens of George Dickens, Henry W. Stevenson or Victor Huguenot I had concluded that all the regular authors had passed on or were getting too old to make a decent living.

I was, in short, just one of the general public, a "dear reader."

But here was revelation. Here was a real pulsating, breathing, perspiring author; one with whom I had eaten hog-bosom and brown beans and with whom I had conversed upon terms of equality.

The thing did not seem possible.

My friend was working for a trade paper—something like the *Squab Growers' Gazette* or the *Hardware Dealers' Guide*—soliciting advertising. He had taken pen in hand and had written an account of some Alaskan experience. His journal, being short of space, had printed it. Nothing more amazing had ever come to my attention. Not once had he committed authorship, but twice; and he had reaped a golden reward for each offence! Ten dollars a story was the price he had wrung from that publication.

I had not realized that honest money could be made with such ease.

Never had chunks of money like that been handed to me except in payment for carrying something—usually something heavy, like canned goods or green house-logs. Here then, it struck me, was a chance to live in comparative idleness; and on the spot I decided to become an author while the boom was on. This other fellow was scarcely half my size; I could carry twice as much as he; there seemed to be no good reason why I should not write stories that would sell for, say, twenty dollars.

I began authoring as soon as I could find a place to sit down, and the immediate fruit of my first paroxysm may rightly be called my maiden effort. I did make an effort this time; I worked feverishly for fear some blight, some national calamity would put an end to this golden age of letters before I could get in on it.

I limbered up upon a fact story. I got my blood going and my muscles at work by doing an article which I entitled "The Quest of the Ptarmigan." It was just a warm-up, but having mastered the secrets of writing I hastily mailed it to a sporting magazine, then bowed my neck, laid back my ears and did some fiction.

I did two or three stories before I heard from that first article, and it is perhaps lucky that I did; for while the sporting magazine was delighted to welcome a new contributor, and while it accepted my hunting story with pleas-

ure, etc., etc., it shocked me with the disclosure that it paid for its contributions with subscriptions to the magazine. I could have as many as I wished—please write the names and addresses plainly. That was as far as its sporting nature permitted it to go. I sent the names and closed up my plant.

I left literature flat and turned to lime and cement, with a side line of metal lath and fire brick. Of course there was a joker in this job, too; I had to lug samples of fire brick—a suitcase full—to the foundries. And some idiot had spread those foundries all over the suburbs of Chicago instead of confining them to the “loop district.”

I was completely out of the authoring humor when I heard from my first fiction story. *McClure's Magazine* accepted it and informed me that a check would follow in due time. Of course I knew that a mistake had been made, and wrote them that a careless office boy had evidently slipped a communication intended for Rudyard Kipling into my envelope but it was all right with me. They assured me, however, that such was not the case and asked to see more of my work.

More of my work! It wasn't work, for there was no heavy lifting whatever connected with writing stories; so I asked them to wait a minute until I could show them some.

That is about how it happened. I wrote nights and Sundays, in street cars and on railroad trains.

It was easy and I liked it immensely, for I could sit down while I was doing it.

When my acquaintances from the foundries joshed me about being an author I didn't resent it. I winked and told them that I had been in the gold business in Alaska, had taken up the brick business in Illinois and was now endeavoring to combine the two. They considered it a very good joke, but all the time I knew there was no joke about it.

VIRGINIA FRAZER BOYLE

Of course, the verses written over a modest little "nom" and printed in local newspapers do not count. Their reward was, sometimes, not even thanks; and with what unflinching, malicious joy a certain compositor maimed their poetical feet. Through all these years, the anguish of it is potent yet.

The first real thrill might be considered as twins, for, after much waiting, two came—within a week of each other. "After the Family Reunion" has never been included in a collection of verse, but it brought a little blue slip signed "Harper & Brothers," making payable to me the sum of fifteen dollars. As I unfolded the letter and discovered it, I had a guilty sense of having defrauded that firm out of exactly that amount. When no one was observing, I looked it over several times a day, trying to get used to it—when a second slip arrived (I think it was a yellow one, this time), bearing the signature of the Treasurer of The Century Company, for sixty dollars, in payment for my first story, entitled "How Jerry Bought Malviny."

Now I was sure that The Century Company had defrauded themselves, for this tale was only a plantation story which had been current in the family always. If I had lived less than a thousand miles from New York, I am not sure but that I would have taken the train and personally explained to both editors. My father and mother only smiled when I confided to them my doubts of the intrinsic value of my commodities. So, I took the matter to my paternal grandmother—a charming lady of the old school, who had always dominated every branch of the family, though most amiably. I will confess that I would rather have faced a battery with my proposition than my grandmother. But I knew that she, of all the family, would express some positive opinion. While I almost held my breath, the note of the Harper acceptance was read, with evident appreciation. Eagerly, I extended the little blue slip—when I saw the lines about her mouth tighten.

"Send it back! Tell them that you appreciate it—but send it back at once!"

"But, Grandmother—," I interrupted.

"Virginia—hear me! If you receive remuneration for the work of your hands or your brain—you can no longer be called a gentlewoman."

"But—Grandmother—you wrote, and so did Aunt Mat!"

Grandmother folded her hands. "In North Carolina, in my day, no gentlewoman's writing appeared in the prints. I did write, it is true, but I kept my poetry in my hat trunk and made neat pen copies only by urgent request. In your Aunt Mat's day times had changed; she did print, but only under a *nom de plume*, and she would have spurned payment for any of her songs. No, my daughter—send back the check and request that they print your poem unsigned."

The oracle had spoken, and I held the *Century* check. while Henry Mills Alden received the first letter; how—I often heard in after years. In fact, I had the pleasure of seeing again, in his private office in Franklin Square, my first business letter to *Harpers'*. The check was returned with the kindest of personal notes stating that magazines of the status of *Harpers'* did not print anything without paying for it and did not publish anonymously unless there was a good reason for it. It was needless, then, to return the *Century* check.

Seventy-five dollars lay on my conscience and burned in my pocket; and though it was Christmas time I felt that I had no right to appropriate it through the usual channels. As a propitiation to my grandmother's ideals the amount was evenly divided between a Working-Girls' Home, then much in need of funds, and an orphan asylum. The dear old Grandmother of The Old South, whose own last poem was written in her ninetieth year and printed after her death over her own name, lived long enough to become reconciled to the new order of things.

In conclusion: it is astonishing how soon one becomes commercialized—for all this happened many, many years ago.

BERTON BRALEY

I've been looking over my manuscript record lately, and noting with a melancholy interest how many dear, dead magazines there are. *Harpers' Weekly*, *Human Life*, *Puck*, *Hampton's*, *Ladies' World*, the *Home Sector*, *Every Week*, the *Illustrated Sunday Magazine*, the *Associated Sunday Magazines*—the list is long and in the main honorable. There is much noble blood on the hands of the Paper Trust and the Congress that passed the zone second-class postage bill.

Eheu and also fugaces! My personal interest in this chronicle of the departed is due to the discovery that most of these periodicals purchased material from me—and died shortly afterwards.

And looking back more years than I care to mention, I recall that My First Appearance was in a little magazine which disappeared from circulation shortly following my contribution. I seem to have begun my career as an accessory before the fact of its demise.

The magazine was a little periodical, weekly, I think—no pun intended—published in Chicago and entitled *The American Youth*. At the age of eleven I wrote a fairy story which explained the color of the grass as due to a conjoined attack of jealousy and tears on the part of a mythical people who inhabited the world before grass was even thought of. As I related it, these people were small but exceedingly frequent, and they became so jealous of the happiness of a certain prince and princess, that they all turned green with jealousy and then wept so hard that they stuck themselves fast in the mud created by their tears.

I tried it on *The Youth's Companion* and *St. Nicholas* but my explanation of grass failed to take root. Then I sent it to *The American Youth* and in a few weeks received ten copies of the magazine with my story in *actual print*, thuswise;

WHY THE GRASS IS GREEN
 a Fairy Story by Berton Braley
 (Eleven Years Old)

Proud!—I'll say so! That's the greatest thrill I've ever got out of writing, and I don't mind admitting that even now my stuff in print always affords me a bit of a thrill—it looks different and more interesting, somehow. Well, doesn't yours? If not I'm sorry for you.

But I didn't continue as a successful boy author—perhaps the avenues of publicity for boy authors were not as broad as they seem to be nowadays. I was eighteen before I made my second appearance in print in anything except school magazines. That second appearance was in *Judge*—and my verses brought me three dollars. I didn't frame the check, I spent it. I've never seen the check I could afford to frame.

My third appearance—All right, Mr. Toastmaster, I'm through. Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you.

GELETT BURGESS

Editors, with me, were an acquired taste. It was not until long after I had ceased to be one that I began to like them. The fact is I began at the top of the ladder as a publisher and worked gradually down till I became a mere author.

At the top? No, now I think of it, I began all over the ladder at the age of fourteen as publisher, editor, printer and contributor of *The Clyppir*, a magazine two inches square.

This was my first printed work. I printed it myself.

Now I have often heard the amateur speak wonderingly of "breaking into" the periodicals. There is only one way, and that is the same way one breaks into a house. Don't try the big front door—jimmy a side window! That's what I did. Listen.

The Boston *Transcript* used to print (and may print now) every Saturday a page of "Notes and Queries." You know those foolish questions asked by the B. Q. X.'s and Veritasses who keep yellowed scrap books and "recall" historic things? Well, being a clever youth, I noticed, that most of these queries began like this: "Can you give me the rest of the poem beginning, etc., etc." Aha! There was my chance.

Forthwith I, also, wrote:

"Dear Editor:

"Who is the author of the poem commencing 'The dismal day with dreary pace' and can you give the verses? F. E. C."

This being duly printed, I sent my "follow-up" letter: "Editor of the *Transcript*:

"The author of the poem commencing 'The dreary day' etc., is Frank Gelett Burgess, and the whole poem is as follows:

The dismal day with dreary pace
 Hath dragged its tortuous length along;
 The gravestones black, and funeral vase
 Cast horrid shadows long.

Oh, let me die, and never think
 Upon the joys of long ago;
 For cankering thoughts make all the world
 A wilderness of woe.

Yours truly,

B. G. F."

Of course it was printed. You see it's easy when you know how. To this day, this is the only sure way I know of getting a manuscript printed. (Except one; for which, read on, read on!) To be sure I wasn't paid for it, but as I have said I didn't then like editors.

This success emboldened me, as a sophomore, to indite (free? Yes!) the depraved confession of a haschisch eater,

with diagrams to make it scientific, for *The Tech*; but owing to the revolting nature of the article I dared not sign it lest my mother question the facts.

The first battle between Literature and Civil Engineering was won by the lady, when I wrote my first story "The 23rd Séance" for the Boston *Budget*. After that I took less and less interest in Railroading, and building bridges in the Andes.

Followed (we're not using "*there* followed" this season, you know), a brief career with a Sunday School paper; hurry, reader, hurry, we're almost there, in which I appeared as a poet and essayist.

We come now to my first really professional work—an honest-to-goodness crook yarn called "The Exit of Dress Suit Bob" printed, and yes actually paid for, by that famous weekly which has been called the Cradle of the Modern Californianistic School of Fiction—in short, *The Wave*. And she *did* wave in those days too, with Frank Norris and Juliet Wilbor Tompkins and Hubert Henry Davies and Will Irwin and Geraldine Bonner and James Hopper and me! As the editor is still alive and a member of the League I shall not name my price. But at that time it wasn't the money, it was the principle of the thing—much like writing for this book.

And then came *The Lark*, another easy side door to Literature. For two blessed years I was my own editor and never refused a single one of my own contributions, not even "The Purple Cow." This is another infallible way to succeed in writing. No stops, a through express train to Fame—unless you happen to get ditched. But at that, it's hard work at 75 a month, and it tries one's literary conscience.

I never saw a really honest editor. I never hope to see one. But I can tell you, anyhow, I'd rather see than be one!

ELLIS PARKER BUTLER

I believe the first piece I ever had published was a set of verses on some local topic, printed in the *Muscatine Journal*.

I sent them anonymously and I think the name I signed was "Ayah," which was what my kid sister used to call me, not being able to say "Ellis." I was then only a small boy.

I remember more clearly my second effort, which was an imitation of "The splendor falls on castle walls," and described a local cyclone. There were four or five verses of this. This was sent to the same paper anonymously; and one reason I recall it so vividly is because I discovered, after I had mailed it, that I had used an envelope in which I kept all my supply of unused postage stamps. To lose the stamps was a calamity, and the *Journal* did not use the poem.

The first piece for which I was paid was, I remember, written when I was a small boy still. It was called "Shorty and Frank's Adventure," and I sent it to one of the numerous cheap juveniles then extant, and received fifty cents for it, all in one cent postcards! After that I wrote and wrote. *The Waverly*, which sent a dozen copies of itself in payment, and revised my stories with a free hand, used a lot of my stuff. *Life*, *Truth*, *Puck*, *The New England Magazine*, and *The Midland Monthly*, of Des Moines, began sending small checks for short verse, and *The National Magazine* paid a few dollars for short prose, but the first real check I received was from *The Century Magazine*. I think this was for eighty dollars, and for a short humorous piece called "My Cyclone-Proof House."

In those days I used to have a memorandum book with thirty-one lines to the page and until a manuscript had been to thirty-one publications I did not think it was hopeless. Now I use a card system and don't never think no manuscript is never hopeless, not never at all.

I have never been an "intellegencia" or an "intellectual" or a "genius." I've been a hard-working hack. I've earned what I got.

EDWARD CHILDS CARPENTER

Before I was even acquainted with the inside of a theatre, before I even knew what a play was, I discovered, in the family library, the complete works of a certain dramatist commonly known as William Shakespeare, and complete in one huge volume.

It was not the text which first challenged my youthful attention; it was the character of the engraved illustrations. Never had it been my good luck to behold so many scenes of battle, murder and sudden death assembled between two covers. It is true that there were a few representations of the pastoral lover, the rope-ladder lover and the dying lover; but the artist, even when illustrating the comedies, had an unerring instinct for the bloody moment, such as "Kill Claudio!" and "A sentence! Come, prepare!" It was an invitation to an orgie of gore!

I began with "Macbeth." The verse annoyed me at first. I thought it was a fool way to write. And of course there were many words and phrases that meant nothing to me; but I found the story and thought it great stuff. Although I read most of the others, "Macbeth," my first love, was my last; and I still think it the greatest play that ever was written.

In those days of my initiation I entertained the belief that a play meant the stories of Shakespeare exclusively; and I remember my shock when later on I learned that plays could be, nay were, written by other people; but I scorned them in my heart as mere imitators of a great original.

At that time the theatre was a closed door to me. Once a resplendent aunt carried me off to a place of red plush and gold paint filled with lights and music and people, where something very exciting was going on, but whether it was a performance of "Pinafore" or "Uncle Tom's Cabin" I do not know. It has only remained a delightful blur and never was in any way associated in my mind with the Works of William Shakespeare.

What has all this to do with my maiden effort? Everything! From reading the Bard's plays, I advanced—when I reached the age of rebellion—to seeing them performed; and from seeing them performed, sprang the desire to write some like them. I tried. It wasn't so easy. Still, I kept on writing, saying nothing to any one except my elder brother, a sympathetic soul.

He consulted an actor friend, who advised that if I really wanted to write plays I should go on the stage and learn something about the practical application of the art. Well, Shakespeare himself was an actor. Why shouldn't I follow his example?

At that time I was about seventeen, and Mr. Otis Skinner was wearing the Shakespearian halo with debonnaire distinction. I said to myself: "I will go and act with him."

Wires were pulled, and one Sunday morning I found myself face to face with Mr. Skinner at his hotel. I frankly told him that I wanted to become a member of his company and to prove how worthy I was, I began reciting Richard III's soliloquy, "Now is the winter of our discontent," etc.

When I had finished Mr. Skinner nodded a kindly, "Yes." This I took for encouragement. "Now," I said, "I'll give you something else." Whereupon, I recited a long speech ending thusly:

"May all the love I've borne him change to hate,
 May pity from my breast forever fly,
 And in its place let cruelty be lodg'd;
 Aye, for the time, may I forget my sex—
 And tune all thoughts to further my revenge!"

Mr. Skinner looked puzzled. "It *sounds* like Shakespeare," he said, "but I don't seem to recall it. What's it from?"

I smiled at Mr. Skinner benevolently. "Oh, that?—that's from something of my *own*!"

"Ah, I see—you are a *playwright*," acknowledged Mr. Skinner, evidently impressed with this fragment from my maiden effort—a tragedy, I am inclined to believe.

Its title I have forgotten, but I think it might well have been called "Lay Off Macduff, or Banquo's Little Sister."

As for Mr. Skinner, he somehow managed to go on acting without me.

ROBERT W. CHAMBERS

There was no romance connected with my maiden effort.

The story was written in the evenings to mitigate the ennui of being obliged to live, for a while, in Germany.

During daylight hours I was busy painting. At night I preferred a pad, pencil, and my own company to any alternative which Bavaria had to offer.

So it happened that I perpetrated the paper-covered novellette called "In the Quarter."

I had nothing particularly in view when I did it. Any excellence in it was due to my Mother's criticisms of my own unwieldy and lumbering language.

When it was finished, my Father, who was departing for New York, took it with him. I don't think that he thought much of it. His was that polished culture consequent upon intimate knowledge of all that is best in classic literature. My Mother was even more widely read in several modern languages, and I realize, now, that she tolerated the result of my efforts merely because she hoped it might lead to something better.

As I remember, now, all the good old conservative publishers declined to avail themselves of the opportunity to pitchfork me into the literary arena where critics raged and ravened. It remained for an obscure Chicago publisher to publish the story in paper and pay me, ultimately, \$150 for selling a rather large edition and then several other editions.

Why anybody bought the book is beyond me. Eventually

the publisher became bankrupt and I bought in the book and the plates, destroyed the latter, and have never re-issued the book.

I am sorry I cannot offer a more romantic and more interesting article for this series. But Truth is mighty and, sometimes, is told.

RICHARD WASHBURN CHILD

If I understand that I am to record the first printed work of the author in question, I turn to an illustrated "History of the Civil War," completed, original sources indicate, at the age of seven.

This opus was privately printed. It was printed by me without the use of a press or other mechanical devices, excepting, of course, the lead pencil. The original copy remains preserved in the archives of my mother. Inasmuch as, and for good and sufficient other reasons, it is catalogued under Fiction, its title, "The History of the Civil War," as in the case of other works of contemporary and elder historians, conceals with becoming modesty an imaginative faculty of no mean flying ability. In passing, it may be said that the author waited for an appropriate period to pass to gain a perspective view before undertaking his labors; the author was born in 1881.

The prodigious though unprinted maiden effort persisted throughout childhood.

Looking back upon collected works of that early period the critic would pick out as noteworthy a long and it must be confessed laborious work entitled "A Trip Down the Mississippi," completed at the age of twelve. The skill of combining information from the Encyclopædia as to every town from the source of the River to the Gulf, with the fanciful adventures of two boys who occupy the foreground of the plot, was of no mean calibre. Plot, characters and canoe, were never able to pass a Burlington, a Vicksburg or a Baton Rouge, until the author had uncovered all the

exports, bank-clearings and latest population of these famous ports. It was a novel filled with municipal obstruction. Future generations may give it a regard equal to any which may be conferred upon a certain short story entitled "The Man with a Penetrating Eye" or an "Essay of Bigots" or upon a poem or two of the same period.

The author must have experienced a subsequent era of normality. Like a growing tree he put forth few blossoms in a period when he yearned to weigh enough to play on the school eleven and yet felt lighter whenever he touched hands with a certain damsel of fourteen who after some twenty odd years now outweighs the author by several stone.

The Madness seized him again only when he was challenged to seek editorship on a school paper; it has never released him since. He wrote prolifically. He reported baseball games, penned editorials, produced quips, short stories, articles and all that fills into the cracks between. College journalism was only a larger pond. Not even all the college professors and assistants of the Harvard College Department of English, skilled as they were then in killing off the creative impulse on the one hand, or raising the lavender sterility of affected criticism on the other, could cure the malady.

So far for honor and art's sake and the Urge!

Then came the Boston *Transcript* in all the ruffles of her Saturday edition, flouncing her checks; and the *Saturday Evening Post* flirting for a story written by a Senior; and *The Youth's Companion* giggling behind her fan for the favor of juveniles; the great *McClure's* sweetly singing; and *Collier's* with thousands of dollars offered as trophy for knights and ladies in literary jousts.

I am a hardened sinner now. Not yet forty, I am among the oldest of veterans who still make appearances in the books and magazines. The fact that I am a lawyer helps my case but little.

And looking back, I cannot see that my effort was ever very maidenly.

IRVIN S. COBB

It is hard for me to say just what my maiden effort was. Perhaps it would be nearer the truth were I to confess that there were several of them—all maidens; all tending the vestal fires of my earlier artistic ambitions.

I cannot recall the time in childhood when the mere sight of a sheet of clean paper failed to arouse in me a desire to make black marks on it. My earliest known photograph shows me, at the tender age of twenty months, lying flat upon my stomach—I could lie flat upon my stomach then—scribbling upon a sheet of paper with a stub of pencil.

Tradition has it that on this occasion, having been dressed in my Sunday best and taken under parental escort to the photographer's establishment, I resolutely refused to be interested in the promise of the officiating functionary that a little bird was about to come out of the black box. It would seem that, at the moment, I cared little for ornithological phenomena. It is also recorded that I howled, opening my mouth widely.

I am constrained to believe that when, at that age, I opened my mouth widely I must have looked a good deal like a detachable rim.

Now, my parents did not desire to have an interior view of me. They knew already that I possessed superior acoustic qualities, and had no wish to preserve the revealed aspect of my personal sounding-board with the aid of the camera's eye. Rather, they longed that I might be shown with my features composed; for already the Home Beautiful movement was spreading through America.

But I declined to be beguiled by cajolery, blandishments, or the prospect of beholding foolish little birds flying loosely about. I have been told that I wept unabatedly and whole-souledly until my mother, remembering a predilection already evidenced by me, put in my fingers a scrap of lead-pencil. Immediately I became calm and a faded photograph, which now is treasured in the family archives, was the result.

I imagine that I was trying to draw rather than to write,

for I started out in life to be an artist. As far back as I can remember I drew pictures of sorts. Pictures which I drew at the age of four years old have been preserved. I doubt whether Michael Angelo drew any better at the age of four than I did; and judging by some of his canvasses which I have seen, I am constrained to believe that Rubens, in his maturity, did not know much more about drawing the outlines of the human figure than did I ere I attained my fifth birthday. One main difference between Rubens and me was that I eventually knew enough to quit trying and he never did.

I grew into boyhood with the smell of printer's ink in my eager young nose. My favorite uncle, for whom I was named and whose especial protégé I was, edited a country newspaper, and I spent most of my leisure hours in his cluttered, odorous and altogether fascinating print-shop. So it was only natural when, at the age of sixteen, I left school by request of the principal, that I should find employment in a newspaper-office in my native town.

My main design and intent then was to be an illustrator and a cartoonist. Already I had disposed of three or four crude drawings to *Texas Siftings*, and had sold at least one alleged caricature to a long-since deceased weekly publication in New York, whose very name I have forgotten. For the caricature I received in payment the sum of one dollar. *Texas Siftings* forgot to send a check. But it printed my pictures.

Presently I began writing bits of descriptive matter to go along with the pictures I drew for the home paper, so that the subscribers, reading what I wrote, no longer might say that my drawings were the worst things which appeared in the paper. As time passed I found myself writing more and drawing less. Soon I quit drawing altogether and devoted my journalistic energies to writing.

Approximately eighteen years elapse. . . .

I was now a member of the staff of a New York evening newspaper. I wrote news and news-specials, covered assignments, did a column of so called humor for the editorial

page, and an occasional signed contribution for the magazine section of the Sunday edition. A good deal of what I wrote might properly be called fiction but it purported to be fact. Many of the fictions which get into the New York evening papers masquerade under headlines as facts.

This brings us up to the summer of 1911. One day, offhand, I made a bet with a friend that I could write a piece of fiction of a serious nature and that when it was written I could sell it to a magazine. My vacation started the following week. In the last two days of that vacation I wrote the first draft of my first story. When I had revised it somewhat I offered it to the *Saturday Evening Post*, and the *Saturday Evening Post* accepted it and published it and I won my bet, and gave up earning an honest living as a newspaper reporter and turned fiction-writer. The name of the story was "The Escape of Mr. Trimm."

I do not know whether "The Escape of Mr. Trimm" may rightly be called my maiden effort, but I do know what the graphic art escaped when I decided to take up literature rather than drawing.

EDMUND VANCE COOKE

I think my first "effort" must have preceded my "maidenhood" considerably. Not that I lisped in numbers, like the w. k. example of Pope, but I think I stuttered a trifle. Anyway, I vaguely recall an "effort," when I was in my childish days, the remains of which are more fragmentary than the "efforts" of Sappho. (Q.V.—would any one call hers "maiden" efforts?) Be that as it may, the only fragment of my "effort" which I recall at all ran something like this:

"There was a boy named Eddie Cooke,
Who was going to forsook
And take with him a little book."

This was stark realism (there *was* a boy, a journey and

a book!) but it is not without pride that I note that, even then, I sturdily turned my face away from *vers libre*.

But as this effort never saw printer's ink, perhaps it would be more in keeping to consider the first products which shone forth from a typed page. I say products because I cannot quite recall which was maid and which was matron of these two "poems" which found publication just before my early teens. I am sure their sentiments were wholly commendable and highly moral, if a bit didactic. One exhorted mankind in general

"Never give up in despair."

and the other pointed sympathetically the somewhat obvious lesson

"When a person is falling, they're easily thrown."

It was a great mortification to have it discovered to me that I had made a grammatical blunder in the title which was also the refrain, but I was greatly cheered a score of years later by an article in *The Writer*, by Forrest Morgan, in which he contended vigorously for the use of "they" as the third-person indeterminate pronoun. As Mr. Morgan was then an editor and is now (I believe) librarian at Hartford, Connecticut, and as he was my beau ideal of the meticulous and accomplished scholar, I felt somewhat absolved for my early indiscretion in English.

However, there was another "maiden effort," and this one bore the hall mark of success; nay, rather the dollar mark, for it was the first "effort" which brought an answering check.

Though I had now attained the ripe age of fourteen years, I was a constant reader of *Golden Days*, a periodical for the youth of that period; and naturally when I wandered afield my first literary pot-shots were directed towards the editor whose product I knew best.

I remember vividly that it took several efforts to land the real "effort"; and for the life of me I could not see why my

products were rejected when inferior ones were printed in every issue. Incidentally, I have never quite recovered from that attitude of mind.

But when the first acceptance—and check—did come! Well, we have bandied billions so freely around the world of late that I find it hard to realize that my first payment was a check for only five dollars, for never did any piece of paper look so large or so important—to me.

The title of this maiden effort was "Shoveling Snow," its theme the adventures of a small boy, poor but not too proud to work; but as for the rest it is lost to the world forever. As far as I was able to learn the story was never printed. "What do you make of that, Watson?"

Do editors accept stories from budding geniuses for purposes of encouragement, or from pure philanthropy? Or, are they of such a canny race that they thus obtain life subscriptions to their periodicals? If *Golden Days* still existed I presume I should still be buying it week by week in the hope of reveling in my maiden effort, redolent of that fresh print flavor so dear to the nostrils of all authors, particularly all authors of maiden efforts.

MARY STEWART CUTTING

I am tempted to ask in plain American, in response to the appeal of the Authors' League: "Whatcher mean, Maiden Effort?" There seem to have been so many efforts of that kind!

Looking back, perhaps the most salient one was a poem written in my teens for which, one afternoon when I was alone in the apartment, I received an acceptance from the editor of *Lippincott's Magazine*, with a check for Three Dollars enclosed.

I can't begin to tell you how wonderful and unbelievable and delicious this seemed to me. There was no one at hand to whom I could express my excitement—I threw myself down on my bed and laughed and laughed, uncontrollably—and read the letter and the check over and over again with

increasing joy. Then I arose and got the poem, "Days" from my desk and re-read it with awe—it was almost *too* beautiful! I could see why that editor paid me three dollars for it—noble sum!

Suddenly I felt that I couldn't wait another moment before spending that money. Money was no good unless you spent it! My father wouldn't be home until night to cash the check for me, so I put on my hat and coat and went down town—I had a quarter in my purse—and bought three dollars' worth of some lacy ornamentation I coveted, and had the purchase charged to my *father's account*; and went home flushed with triumph.

I can see now that even then I showed that artistic spirit which is always such a help to one in the stupidities of life.

But when, long afterward, I started out on my professionally intentioned magazine career, there ensued a space of two years in which it is already a matter of public record that I sent out manuscripts sixty-three times, and had three accepted. Every single thing I attempted seemed the Maidnest sort of an Effort! There were not sixty-three different stories, you understand; but that figure covered the number of times those dozen or more differing manuscripts, each experimenting in subject matter, went out by mail with enclosed stamps for return.

The first one, indeed, "The Coupons of Fortune," was accepted by Mr. Alden with kind words, little delay and a check for forty dollars.

But the next story, attempted in a humorous vein, which went to that editorial office, remained there for six whole weeks. At the expiration of that time my cousin, Mr. William A. Eddy, and a friend of Mr. Alden's approached the latter for what we hoped would be favorable news. You were always told that when manuscripts were kept longer than usual there was a presumption of ultimate acceptance.

But a personal search resulted in finding that this particular tale, entitled "Henry," did not conform to rule. "Henry" had slipped behind a drawer in a secretary. When retrieved, Mr. Alden said, with a reminiscent smile: "Yes,

I remember; this was a very amusing story" and *handed it back to my cousin.*

Another maiden effort which attempted the pathetic fared in a somewhat similar way. I went for it myself, this time, for the great pleasure of seeing Mr. Gilder. Even when editors don't take your "stuff," it's a pleasure to talk to them—they're so awfully nice to you.

Mr. Gilder said of my latest endeavor: "This brought tears to even my hardened editorial eyes," and *handed it back to me.*

All the rejected manuscripts went in other magazines after a while; but do you wonder that each venture in a new line seemed a distinctly maiden effort?

That was before I struck my gait as a chronicler of the most usual and commonplace, in the *Stories of Married Life.*

Never shall I forget my surprise and gratitude when Mr. S. S. McClure sent me word that he would "take all of that kind" that I could write. And, wonder of wonders, when Mr. Franklin B. Wiley, of *The Ladies' Home Journal*, actually came all the way from Philadelphia to annex me as a contributor!

But to this day I haven't won entirely past the feeling that each story I start out on is still in the nature of a maiden effort. You are never quite sure that it is going to write itself as you dreamed it in the first glow of its inception.

In those olden days failure was never daunting to me. I could always meet it hardily, as an adversary that simply had to be—and could be—overcome.

But I am free to confess that some measure of success rather scares me a little. Can I do as well on this story as they seem to think I did in the one before?

That is the question, you see—one is forever beginning anew!

CONINGSBY DAWSON

I have been wondering how maiden an effort has to be if it is to be deemed worthy to be called a maiden effort. If appearing in print is the test, my first effusion was published at an age when Daisy Ashford was an obscure nursery amateur.

I was eleven when a long since defunct magazine brought out a pious allegory from my youthful pencil, entitled "The Angel's Sin." What it was all about I have forgotten, but the opening sentences still bring a blush of shame:

"Heaven was silent, for one had sinned. Before the Throne of God a prostrate figure lay; but the Throne was wrapped in cloud."

Not such a bad beginning for eleven! So thought my sisters and my cousins and my aunts. Even I, who am my harshest critic, am of opinion that it was not so bad.

It is not its badness that makes me blush to this day, but its reception by an important portion of my at that time very limited public. Though I was sufficiently adult to write with confidence of what they did in heaven, I was still in the process of acquiring an education. I went to school, in fact, and one of my schoolmates stumbled across a copy of that unfortunate magazine.

He learned my contribution by heart. He taught it to various of his friends. Through the foggy evenings of an entire winter he and his gang followed me home, reciting in chorus "Heaven was silent, for one had sinned," etc. It was in this way that I gained my first lesson concerning the tribulations of authorship, a subject in which I am now profoundly versed.

My first maiden effort in book form was a volume of poems, sponsored by no less a house than the Macmillan Company. I was twenty-two when it saw daylight and received as financial recompense the sum of twenty dollars, which certainly did not defray the expenses of typewriting.

My maiden effort as a novelist appeared one year later and yielded me about a hundred dollars.

During the next six years I published in all three novels, seven volumes of literary criticism and innumerable short stories. From my entire output for that period I did not receive enough to satisfy my tailor—and yet every book I wrote, save one, was published.

It was not until I was thirty that I struck luck with “The Garden Without Walls.” So little impression had my earlier work made that it was hailed as a first novel and is to this day regarded as my maiden effort. But my genuine maiden effort had been perpetrated nineteen years before and atoned for by a little pale-faced boy, who fled nightly from the Philistines through the foggy streets of London.

EDITH BARNARD DELANO

My literary ambition began, and came very near ending, at the age of eight. I wrote a “Life of Queen Elizabeth.” I think it must have been all of two hundred words in length, and it was carefully inscribed in a small book which I had made out of my mother’s best note-paper and tied at the back with pale blue embroidery silk. I think I realized that it was rather brief; but I know I thought it a highly valuable contribution to the world’s information. I loved it; I carried it with me, hidden in a book or a pocket, wherever I went—and that was the reason of the tragedy that came near ending forever my literary activities.

For I dropped my “Life of Queen Elizabeth” in school! An older girl found it, called a crowd—to me it seemed a jeering mob—around her at recess, and read it aloud, even elaborating on the oddities of spelling. For twenty years I made no further attempt at authorship; for twenty years writing was the last thing in the world that I wanted to do.

Then, one summer’s day, my morning mail brought me a circular from an ambitious young man who had started an Author’s Agency. I have always wondered how on earth

that circular came to me, and whether the Author's Agent covered the entire country with his circulars; but it was a most appealing document, and made authorship seem very easy. And I was exceedingly hard up at the time and had not formed the habit of earning—and the habit of spending was born in me!

"Goodness!" I thought as I read that circular, "if *that's* all you have to do!"

So I did it. I wrote a story, and called it "A Declaration of Independence," copied it neatly on my typewriter—I had used one all my life—and mailed it to the agent. In six weeks I had a check for thirty-five dollars; *The Woman's Home Companion*, then a small magazine, had taken the story and paid the colossal sum of forty dollars for it!

There was nothing to it! So I wrote another, and another, and still that agent mailed me checks. My luck held through the tenth story; if it had not, I am sure I should never have written any more.

I've had plenty of wholesome jolts since then, and I've known many agents of many kinds. But luck and the agent did it for me. When they failed—and the agent held out longer than the luck—I began really to work and to study the job that seemed to have been wished on me; and, after a few more years, I came to the conclusion that it wasn't the worst job in the world, anyway; and by that time I had no inclination for any other. So I am still doing it; but it's fiction for me, and no more history—though I retain my tenderness for Queen Elizabeth.

LEE WILSON DODD

It seemed a simple thing to recover; one had only to think back a little. But it proved a long, dim trail when I sought to follow it. And, finally, I had almost to psycho-analyze myself to drag out from the Unconscious my very firstest effort to get my toes on the literary ladder.

Yes; it was before the summer I spent with my cousin, Ralph Dawson, on his father's farm in Forest County, Pa.—

so I couldn't have been nine yet. That—the one perfect summer of my life—fixes my ninth birthday for me. So I must have been seven or eight; seven, I rather think. I was going to a private school in New York City and didn't know, fortunately, all that I was missing. Still, New York was different, then; our part of it. It had some of the qualities of a country town. You could play ball safely enough right out in the middle of the street. And the cops let you. . . . However, all this seems to have very little to do with my maiden effort.

What had most to do with it was my father's library. Father—one of the gentlest and most lovable of men—was what we have since learned to call "a soulless corporation lawyer." And as some evidence of his soullessness, perhaps, his chief interest in life lay in the reading of good books. By which I mean good books—i.e., those written by the best, wisest, wittiest, humanest men the world has known. He had a library full of such books, all their bindings rubbed from use, all their pages cut and thumbed; and they were ranged on open shelves, and even a little boy could reach the top shelf from a chair.

There were no forbidden volumes, either. Rabelais was there for what a little boy could make of him, which wasn't much; and Herbert Spencer was there for what a little boy could make of him, which was just nothing at all. And Scott and Dickens and Thackeray were there, and all the poets you ever heard of, including Byron and Shelley and Swinburne.

And then there were whole shelves of impossible stuff with titles like "Work and Wages," etc. And there were stuffy, solemn-looking histories; but some of them had pictures—Plutarch had pictures. And, perhaps best of all, there was "Chamber's Book of Days!"

So, naturally, smouldging around a library like that—which was also the family sitting room—and hearing father or mother or Aunt Sis read out loud (to us—my sister and me—or to each other), or overhearing them discuss books they had been selfishly reading to themselves . . . well,

naturally, one grew up sort of bookish and queer without knowing exactly at any time just what was the matter with one. If one had been brought up in a normal family solely interested in gossip and Bridge, for example, so many later things might have been different—and on the whole simpler to attend to.

But the maiden effort was due, I feel almost certain, to a reading from Shakespeare. I am equally certain that the reading had not been from "Antony and Cleopatra"; it had probably been from "Twelfth Night." "Antony and Cleopatra" had been glanced through privately, I fancy. At any rate, I determined to write a play about Antony and Cleopatra for my sister and myself to act. My sister had coppery hair, and so did Cleopatra—so the casting was obviously predestined.

And the play was duly composed during the course of a late afternoon study hour. I can remember little about it; but blank verse was unquestionably attempted, and there were plenty of thees and thous in it. Cleopatra, let me remind you, died of a snake bite; so you see all the picturesque possibilities. My sister was just as keen to try them out as I was.

That's why we both developed sore throats that night; we were all choked up by morning and felt perfectly limp. We didn't see how we could, either of us, be expected to go to school. Mother rather thought it wouldn't hurt us to go; she didn't seem to believe there was much the matter with us. However, she finally yielded, dosed us and gargled us, and then went a-marketing—no doubt with her tongue in her cheek.

Then we got busy—with her bed for a stage. We managed a really superb production and rendition of my play, considering our enfeebled state. Cleopatra died grandly, with much flourishing of an improvised serpent. The serpent was really the *clou* of the play and I wish I could remember just how we constructed him. My impression is that he was chiefly tied-in bath-towel with shoe-button eyes; but I give it doubtfully. And since I have been requested

to stick to facts, the rest must be silence. But you've no idea how I regret this stupid restriction. I could have drawn such an amusing picture of mother's return!

HENRY IRVING DODGE

When I was a little boy I was what they called an omnivorous reader. There were only a few books in our village and I read them all as fast as I could beg, borrow or steal them. I read "Ivanhoe" when I was six. Since then I have never opened that famous novel, yet the characters are just as clear to me as if I had only yesterday laid it aside. I remember how impatient I was, even at that age, that Scott didn't sooner vanquish the villain and bring the lovers together in one forever-after embrace.

Then, I read "Gold Hunter's Adventures," "Oliver Twist," "Hard Cash," all the Mother Goose stuff, Hans Andersen's stories, the Beadle dime novels, Poe, Irving, "Lorna Doone," and "Toilers of the Sea." I believe I was influenced by each and every one of them. As fast as I would finish a story I would want to write one just like it and wondered why I couldn't.

Just how much the foregoing masters were responsible for my maiden effort, I don't know. They started me going. Then, they must have abandoned me. The result of their joint effort—expressed through my pen—was a piece called "Justice at Last," a title which I calculated would make the world sit up and take notice—I was fourteen at the time. I forgot to mention Cinderella—my favorite fiction character, after David Copperfield. Cinderella was my inspiration, really. I pited her and loved her and made up my mind that I could vindicate her even better than did her creator.

In "Justice at Last" the most pronounced villain was a designing, withered old man who was very rich, and correspondingly lacking in bowels of compassion for anybody. There were two villainesses who shall be hereinafter mentioned. Aforesaid mean old man had a granddaughter, a

kind of slavey—the London kind that cleans up the scullery and polishes the lodgers' boots. Also he had two daughters; the third daughter, mother to the scullery maid, I had killed off—I don't remember just how—in order that aforesaid scullery maid might be an orphan and otherwise made as desolate as possible, for dramatic purposes. Nellie—that was the orphan's name—was, of course, treated very badly by the two aunts. But Nellie had one consolation—her mother used to visit her in dreams and tell her things.

Now, can you guess the end? I'll bet you can, if you're a movie fan, like me, for it's a typical movie plot.

Well, the two wicked aunts schemed and contrived and finally influenced the mean old grandfather to make a will leaving them everything and cutting Nellie off with a shilling. But somehow just before he died the old man got wise to their wicked motives and secretly made another will. I realized in writing the story that a second will, nullifying the first, was not startlingly original, so I determined to make the rest of the yarn absolutely unique in the matter of originality.

Now, the old man was carefully watched by the two aunts. He didn't have any place that he could think of to hide this will—that is, for a long time he didn't. Then he remembered—and here was the stroke of genius hereinbefore referred to—a clock, one of those tall old fellows with a wonderful face and heavy weights. That clock had a false bottom to it. The old man secreted his second will in it. In this will he left everything to Nellie, the beautiful scullery maid. But before he had a chance to tell her anything about it, he died.

The two wicked aunts, as soon as they could do so with a due regard for what people would say, prepared to set Nellie adrift on the cold, cold world. She was to go the following day. But that night she had a dream and as usual her mother came to visit her. In a twinkling she "tipped" Nellie off to the fact of the new will and its hiding place. Nellie forthwith, after decorously waiting for her mother to depart, jumped from her bed, scurried across the icy

floor in her bare feet, opened the door of the faithful time-piece, which—to make the thing more weird—was just striking two, reached down and grabbed the precious document.

In the morning, when her two wicked aunts appeared to push her out into the cold—it was snowing, for dramatic purposes—Nellie turned the tables on them and then munificently and grandiloquently offered them a corner of the kitchen to live in.

“Justice at Last” was published in some village paper up the Hudson River—I don’t remember where. One thing I do remember: it did not bring me the fame I had dreamed of. I secured a number of copies and sent them to my friends but did not receive grateful acknowledgment from any of them.

WALTER PRICHARD EATON

My maiden effort was a “History of the Heavens.” I was not only the author of this Wellsian work, but the illustrator, printer and binder. The edition was limited to one copy. I was eight at the time of publication. At about the same date I wrote several other works of fiction, also, but my parents, unable to pre-visualize “The Young Visitors,” saved none of them.

When I was about ten, I spent my Saturdays in the office of the local weekly paper learning to set type; and then my father bought me a small press (eight by six) and enough brevier and job fonts to enable me to get out a monthly paper of my own, of four pages. In two years it reached a circulation of nearly two hundred and I was charging fifteen cents an inch for ads.

I find on investigation that my editorials were strongly moral in tone, and inclined to be conservative. I suppose I had more fun with this press and my little paper than I have ever had since, and it certainly fixed in my mind the ideal of journalism as a profession so firmly that thereafter I never questioned what I was going to do.

I began to do newspaper work while I was still in college, and also wrote for a school text-book a brief life of John Paul Jones, for which I was paid, I remember \$100. I went from college directly into a newspaper office where I had already worked an entire summer and began to grind out copy as a matter of course. So I fear that I have never really known the thrill of a maiden effort. The nearest thing to it, I suppose, was my pleasure at selling an essay to *The Atlantic* just after I had come to New York and joined the *Tribune* staff. But even this pleasure was considerably tempered by the accustomed smell of ink in my nostrils.

Much has been written about the relations between journalism and literature. I can only say that the newspaper man has an instinctive certainty that what he writes for his paper is sometimes literature and sometimes not, according to his success in bringing off the scene he tries to evoke, and he can always honestly say he would rather "pull it off" in the news columns than in a magazine or between covers.

There is no pose about this. It is true of every good reporter I ever knew. He may reform and become a writer of fiction or plays, but in his heart he will never have the same affection even for his first-born book or drama that he has for certain stories that lived a month or a year in the memory of the city room.

GEORGE ALLAN ENGLAND

This is a very weighty matter to decide. From infancy I was always making efforts in the writing line, but nobody seemed to know it. These were mostly poetical and shall not be quoted here. Thus I gain at once the reader's good-will and gratitude.

The first really ambitious effort, however, took the form of prose and laid me open to the unfounded charge of plagiarism.

It was a novel in XXII chapters, called "An Adventure in Alaska" and was written—at the age of eleven—on slimpsy, blue-lined paper, with a very sharp pen. Nobody would believe I "made it up" myself because there were so many ice-floes, polar bears and things. It didn't seem reasonable that a boy of eleven should have so many bears and icebergs in his system, all his own. The maw of relentless Time has devoured all but four and a half chapters of this immortal work; an irreparable loss to Art, equaled only by that which Art sustained when Nero short-armed himself with a sword.

After the icebergs followed years of Poesy in which June and moon, birth and earth, love and dove and all the rest of 'em ran riot. But it wasn't until I got to Harvard that the curtain rose in a really professional manner. The verses I printed in *The Harvard Illustrated* can hardly be said to count, because I was on the editorial staff of that magazine and could run anything I wanted to—an abviously unfair advantage to take of a perfectly inoffensive, struggling, undergraduate paper. To return, however, to our real maiden effort.

This was "The Race of the Mighty," and dragged down 500 francs from the Paris Edition of the *New York Herald*—and in those days of 1901, 500 francs were real money; yea, even unto about \$100. And twenty years ago a dollar would buy something. I remember that hundred looked bigger to me then than—but let the imagination have free rein.

The way it happened was thus: the *Paris Herald* had offered the 500 francs for the best translation in verse of Gaétan de Méaulne's poem "*La Course des Grands Masqués*." This was a spirited description of an auto race, 'cross-country. Slathers of people from all over the world sent in versions. I dug out one, by the aid of much sweat, a Thesaurus and a French vocabulary of technical terms. I also wrote a slang version of the poem, and sent them both off to Paris, after which I forgot them.

One day a 'phone message came in from a newspaper,

asking me if I was G. A. E., etc., and so on. Yes, I was. "Well, then, we're sending a man out to interview you, as the winner of etc., etc." Tableau, and astonishments. Life has had few moments comparable to that.

The *Herald* not only handed me the 500, but also printed both my versions—the slang one under the title of "The Run of the Goggled Sports"; and no end of publicity followed. From then on I kept writing with renewed courage, and I haven't been doing much of anything since—that is, nothing I care to have talked about.

Incidentally, though I have written tons of verse ever since, I never got another hundred for a poem, and never expect to. For a maiden effort to establish a record is something. Let mine R. I. P.

EDNA FERBER

I've always lied about my maiden effort. I've had to. I couldn't remember its name. I know when I wrote it, and why I wrote it, and how. I even vaguely recall what the thing was about, if any. But its name is gone. During the ten years, or thereabouts, of my writing career, when people have asked me about the first thing I ever wrote I've always said with lying sweetness, "A short story called 'The Homely Heroine.' It came out in *Everybody's* magazine and it's a better short story than I can write today."

I've said it so often, and with such engaging modesty, that I almost believe it myself.

"The Homely Heroine" was my second story, and it was and is good, and I'll probably go right on saying it's my first, once I've got this confession off my conscience. Maybe a confession like this is what I've needed in order to develop. Perhaps that's the Freudian reason for my failure to achieve deathless fame in the past few years.

That first appeared in *Smith's Magazine* with a nice red cover bearing a picture of one of those half-witted red and white girls with china-blue eyes. It was written (the

story, I mean) after Robert W. Chambers' best style and I feel safe in saying that I think he would have recognized it anywhere as a sort of idiot stepchild.

It wasn't so awfully bad, as first stories go. But it certainly wasn't any good.

It was about a young lady who lived in a small town and took the train for Milwaukee, and almost missed it, and heard the train whistle, and ran for it, and forgot her hat and had to ride all the way to Milwaukee and get off the train and everything without a headcovering! And there was a young man on the train with these here now kindly quizzical eyes. That, so help me, was what the story was about. And I suppose they married each other, though I don't know. Certainly one has to do more than go about hatless in order to attract the young man of today.

Life was so much simpler ten years ago. Or I was.

JAMES MONTGOMERY FLAGG

When I was sixteen I persuaded Tudor Jenks, who was then an editor of *St. Nicholas*, to let me go as war correspondent of that magazine to the World's Fair at Chicago. The World's Fair was an enormously sensational event to regular human beings in those days—so to a kid of sixteen it was epochal and amazing and I felt important with my assignment.

I wrote about everything except the terrible Houchy-Kouchy dance that was creating such a furore in the Midway Plaisance. I debated solemnly with myself if I should enter those fearful gates and witness the frightful thing. Whether my article would be complete without some description of what was "intriguing" the crowds worried me.

I remember buying my first walking stick—a gnarled thing from which the paint came off on my hands during the muggy evenings that I stalked through the Fair grounds—I didn't have the nerve to be seen with such a symbol of adolescence in the day-time. But my feet took me past the

Houchy-Kouchy building and I decided from all I had heard I might well ignore that exhibition!

So, I filled a fat note-book with impressions, and they boiled it down at the *St. Nicholas* office to fifteen hundred words, and paid me fifteen dollars. I don't remember whether or not they ever printed any of that.

And it was *St. Nicholas* that first published my drawings.

I had always made drawings from the age of two—of everything imaginable; cows, starting at the tail and evolving that useful animal from that end; portraits of my father, laying great stress on getting a likeness of his fashionable beard, brushed gaily to starboard and port; skinny Zulus with blood-lustful faces—these were mildly discouraged by my parents as even their adult hearts missed several beats upon looking at these savages of mine, but they nevertheless dated them and pigeon-holed them in a sideboard drawer; menageries, complete; Indians, “dudes,” jokes, and it was quite lately that I was presented with a pencilled portrait I had made at three of a terrible pointed Vandyke beard, labelled “Jesus”—inspired by no religious fervor, I am certain.

As a special attention to esteemed visitors a huge pile of my works, done on yellow pad paper, (and my output was large), was taken from the sideboard drawer and shown, one by one, by my father with an attempt at a deprecatory manner.

My father realized at an early stage of his parenthood that there was no use in mapping out a useful career for me. He saw that I had decided, probably before I met him and my mother, that I had dedicated my life to the encouragement of the manufacturers of pencils and paper. I am happy to remember that at no time during my residence with my parents was there ever a hint that I should do any thing but draw.

I was very careful in training my parents, and on the whole found them obedient and respectful.

I did not care for the society of children, and around the age of twelve my two pals were Tudor Jenks of the

St. Nicholas Magazine and Professor Frederick Starr, then in charge of the Anthropological Department of the Natural History Museum.

I helped Professor Star unwrap outlandish pottery and trophies from Africa—I still remember the queer wild smell that accompanied these savage importations—and made drawings of them for his books.

When I was about twelve I took a batch of drawings in to *St. Nicholas*, and Tudor Jenks showed a kindly interest in me and them, as he did for countless young people with artistic and literary ambitions; and as he knew a lot about drawing he helped me. He selected about ten out of the cartload I laid on his desk and made me redraw them with Mr. Higgins' well-known India ink and printed them on a full-page of the magazine. I received my first professional payment for them, ten dollars—in bills—the dear, delightful Century Company always paid CASH in those days!

I walked dizzily home, swerving to the left on my way to acquaint an uncle with the astonishing tale. After that I haunted the *St. Nicholas* and *Century* offices, chumming with editors in all the many departments and spending hours pulling out gigantic drawers choked with marvelous originals. I am glad I couldn't look into the future and know that most *used* original illustrations would be of less value than virgin paper!

Some times I went with Mr. Clark, then managing editor of *St. Nicholas*, to ball games. I never could see what it was about that spectacle that excited that gentleman, as I was bored stiff with them. I remember, once, he took a huge camera with him and enthusiastically bobbed up and down, snapping players—and how put out he was at the end of the afternoon to discover that I had slipped his lens cap on and he hadn't noticed it! So, his pictures were not! But he didn't bawl me out.

But Tudor was my real pal. He taught me many things about the chosen craft and I always feel a debt of gratitude to him for his sympathy and understanding.

JAMES FORBES

My maiden effort, or rather efforts, are anything but pleasant memories. The first was an "Essay"; its subject, "The Mirror."

The class in English, of which I was notably the most stupid member, was compelled to listen to a dry recital of facts concerning some utilitarian object and then retell them in the form of "composition."

The teacher's voice was raucous—and I have always been inordinately sensitive to voices—her diction so abominable, that her daily reading of a chapter from the Bible—which began the school day—almost made me an atheist. Naturally the English lesson was the horror of my fourteen year old days. I could never remember the facts.

On the day in question every boring detail regarding the invention of the mirror, the first use of it, the modern process of manufacture was droned out. As we were returning to our desks I was reprimanded, publicly, for inattention, warned that I must make an effort and that if my paper was marked zero again I would be haled before the principal. That did not bother me but I disliked being so stupid.

I tried, but could not recall anything that I had been told.

So I began to think of mirrors and I was launched, presently, in an autobiography of an old mirror which was ending its days in a second-hand shop. I told of all the faces it had reflected and how it had gradually descended to its last resting place where its old age was solaced by the baby who played with its reflection in the faded glass. I am not sure that I did not have the baby die. I was quite excited and thrilled.

We were summoned to read our "stuff." As one after another of the class read a glib resumé of facts, I began to cringe with shame. I would have eaten my paper but there was too much of it. I was at the foot of the class.

When it came to me I said that I had not written anything. But the teacher had seen it. I begged as much as I dared. Then I resisted her attempts to take it from me but

aid from the older forms was summoned and the paper was removed forcibly. I have had a few bad moments in my life but never any more soul-searing than when I sat and heard that paper read aloud. The sarcasm in her voice, the titters of the class, and her burst of laughter as she read the baby—well, I touched the rock bottom of humiliation. Afterwards I was soundly thrashed, but that was a mere detail in a world of misery.

About seven years later I tried again.

I had become a constant theatre-goer, and, necessarily, because of my income, an occupant of the gallery. My fellow "gallery boys" were a great source of amusement to me because of the strange and amusing idiom in which they expressed their opinions of the plays and the actors. I used to pass them along to my friends, one of whom was a woman who contributed a daily column to a Chicago newspaper. Very often she used some of my stories and finally urged that I do one myself.

So I wrote a gallery boy's impression of a music hall. It was written in slang—the sort of thing that Edward Townsend was doing so wonderfully in "Chimmie Fadden," although I did not know it at the time. I sent in my story and was delighted when I received a check for five dollars and a letter asking me to call.

What impressed me was that, although I had never met the Editor, he addressed me as "Dear Jim." At the luncheon hour I dashed around to his office and was bewildered by the coolness of my reception. He left the room for a moment and I took out the precious letter. I realized that it was addressed "Dear Sir" and that he had used the long "S" which I had never seen outside of Pepys and I had mistaken it for a "J".

I was assigned to do an impression of Eleanora Duse, then making her first visit to Chicago. I selected "Cavalleria Rusticana" as I was familiar with its operatic version. The editor suggested that I do the play from the wings. So I presented his letter to the manager and was given the freedom of "back stage."

I followed the performance from various points of vantage and finally, when it came to the scene where Santuzza falls upon the steps of the church cursing the faithless Turridu I was not more than three feet away. Duse, true to her natural mode of acting, did not turn and theatrically deliver her curse to the audience but directed it straight at me. Or so it seemed. I was literally frozen with terror as the torrent of her rage seemed to fall all about me.

I wandered out of the stage door that night appreciating that I had been privileged to see, at close range, one of the most marvelous exhibitions of acting genius in the theatre. I doubt that I have ever seen one that equalled it.

The next day I called on the editor and said that I could not do the story.

When he demanded the reason I, like the idiot I was, said that it would be a "sacrilege." I offered to do another story. He scorned me and asked me what I did for a living. I replied that I was a bookkeeper in a wholesale grocery store. He told me that I had better stay there. I ventured meekly, "You don't think that I can write?" "No," came quickly, "You belong with the prunes."

I must have lacked the urge, or been a coward, for that teacher's laugh and that word "prunes" remained with me many years, and although, as a press agent, I wrote a great deal of fiction, it was not until nine years later, when I was thirty, that I tried again and wrote for *Ainslee's* a dialogue, "The Extra Girl," which was afterwards dramatized as "The Chorus Lady."

HENRY JAMES FORMAN

Accident has played a prominent rôle in so many maiden efforts at writing that I fear a regrettable lack of drama in my own. For from about the age of thirteen I foresaw and dreamed of no other career than that of a writer.

It was at that callow age that I began to run a serial story in a school journal of some sixty foolscap pages weekly,

written by hand and edited by a lad in the grade above mine—who has not since become either an editor or an author. There was also an artist who illustrated that journal with gorgeous crayon drawings of “The Soudan” and kindred subjects no less familiar to him, and that lad has since become a practising artist. His name is Edouard Steichen.

The serial I was composing is grown dim in my mind. I only remember that there was a yacht in it, that it steered a middle course between G. A. Henty and Jules Verne and that some desperate blade of the John Silver variety, after seizing that admirable craft made himself “Master of the Indian Ocean.” What he did with the Indian Ocean once he possessed it, is a blank in my memory. Perhaps it was a blank in the serial. I do not know. But in a sense that was my earliest maiden effort.

Print I achieved not much later, in newspapers, by giving my services gratis as a sort of apprentice reporter, by contributing to school and college periodicals and indeed, paying a portion of my expense at Harvard by writing articles for the Wednesday and Saturday supplements of the *Boston Transcript*.

In the Christmas recess of my senior year I even wrote a short story that was sold to *The Youth's Companion* for the sum of forty dollars. That story, so far as I know, has never seen the light of day. Though secretly nettled at the magazine's reticence regarding it, I have always cherished a subterranean feeling that *The Youth's Companion*, even though it could not find space for the tale, desired to keep it out of the market, thus preventing competitors from “boosting” their circulations. One must admit, however reluctantly, that that was sound policy. . . .

As my real maiden effort, however, I must regard my first book. Whatever writing I dreamed and hoped to do, I always envisaged in terms of books. I had hoped that my first book would be a novel. It proved however to be a book of travel.

From the moment I left college I desired to write a book.

And whatever time for depression was left me during my service as a reporter on the *Sun*, as an editor of *The Literary Digest* and *The North American Review*, was filled with the darkness of despair that the years were slipping by and no book yet stood to my credit. Again and again I addressed myself to the task of beginning a novel, but always it baffled me. I would read over the first few pages, and recoil in agony from the flatness and the meagreness of the result. Like the blacksmith who began to learn his letters late in life and exclaimed aghast to the school-mistress: "My God, woman, is this A!" I could not but groan when I scanned my own efforts. "Is this fiction!" I concluded that I must attempt less ambitious efforts.

Thanks to the courtesy of the editor and publisher of *The North American Review*, who made it possible for me to take my vacations abroad, I undertook one summer a walking tour in the Hartz Mountains. Heine's "Harzreise" had captivated my fancy as a student and for some years I entertained the notion of travelling the same road in Heine's footsteps. In this instance, as it happened, I had no particular plan for a book, though I did fondly suppose there might be a magazine article in it.

One Monday morning I made my start from Göttingen with a ruck-sack on my back and, if I remember correctly, I was in Göttingen again by the following Monday morning—a total time elapsed of seven days.

All the succeeding autumn and winter, while engaged, single-handed, in getting out *The North American Review*, I occupied myself with romanticizing my seven days' journey through the Hartz Mountains. I wrote in the evenings, but chiefly on holidays and Sundays, endlessly, it seemed, for eight or nine months, conscious all the while that my labor would probably prove the only reward for my pains.

All that winter Gelett Burgess, who, with Will Irwin occupied the front rooms of a top story of which I held the rear, was operating a toy railway train on the floor and building daily new signals and switches, laying new track-age and achieving a skill at the business that has since, as

everybody knows, made Burgess President of the Union Pacific. How I envied him his delightful employment! But I had set myself the task of writing the Hartz, and with patient desperation I plodded on. I was certain no publisher would print it, and more certain still that no one would read it if it were published.

When I had typed it, and offered it to the Scribners, it was refused with energetic promptness. *The Century* followed suit, and in disgust, I turned it over to an agent to do anything she pleased with it. The agent sent it to Houghton, Mifflin & Co., who accepted it as promptly as the others had declined it, and published it with success, I believe, as books of travel go. It went into a second edition very soon and the same publishers on the strength of it signed a contract for another travel book—on Italy—which I subsequently wrote. I still derive bits of royalty from both these books.

But the notable thing about "In the Footprints of Heine" was the astonishing unanimity of the reviews in both England and America. The comment was voluminous and universally favorable, in some instances to the point of hyperbole. I have written several books since then, fiction and non-fiction, but I am still waiting for a reception as wildly stimulating and agreeable as that of the book that I wrote almost consciously for practice in composition, with hardly a thought of publication.

HAMLIN GARLAND

My first attempt at story writing was highly sensational—at least in title, for I called it "Ten Years Dead." It was a short story, a very short story, so short that it hardly got under motion before it stopped. I suspect it ended because my invention gave out.

It all happened a long time ago, so long ago that in writing "A Son of the Middle Border" I neglected to mention it among the beginnings of my fiction. In truth I forgot it,

and it only comes to mind now because the Editor distinctly asked for an account of my first attempt.

Though so sensational in title, "Ten Years Dead" was studiously and coldly veritistic. I met the man who had been ten years dead in the Boston Public Library—I mean that is the way the tale opens, and the calm current of the narrative remained in careful contrast with the title. The theme was the return of a man to familiar home scenes after ten years of "being as one dead." The story was told for the most part in the first person.

It was published in a Boston weekly but I am not going to tell the name of the periodical, for some one might search it out and reprint it, or at least confront me with it. Some of the verse which I wrote at that time I am still able to read even in public but that story would prove comical—or disconcerting to me now.

It comes to me dimly as I write that the theme was suggested to me by a dream. It was after Hawthorne—a very long way after Hawthorne—and I only mention it now because it really was my first published attempt at fiction and I cannot tell a lie—that is I say I won't—because in this case it is more interesting to tell the truth. The date of this attempt was I believe about November, 1885.

THEODOSIA GARRISON

The poetry of the normal, well-fed infant is, at its best, amusing. I wish mine had been that or anything indeed than what it was—all sugar and sweetness and light.

The only touch of flavor about it is the fact that it was laboriously printed on my seventh Christmas Day with the earnest intention of expressing my joy in snow and bells and a holiday and holly-wreaths and the possession of a brand-new dwarf-desk which smelled deliciously of varnish.

On a minute sheet of gift-paper with a Mother Goose picture at the top I expressed my high approval of Yuletide as follows:

It was a day in early May,
 The earth was sweet with flowers,
 Nothing to break the silence
 Of those happy, scented hours.

I spare you the rest which contains the philosophic discourse of a "shepherd lad" to his "flocks and herds" whom he addresses as "So-boss" and "Co-boss" ending with the bland admonition,

Play my pretty lambkins play,
 Life's not all a rainy day.

An earnest study of this will prove the early influence of Longfellow; "Pollyanna" was not yet born and Mr. Chesterton had not written "I think I will not hang myself to-day." An idea which the infant mind seemed struggling to express.

My first published and paid-for verse was a quatrain in *Lippincott's* some eleven years later.

By this time I had ceased to shed sunshine; and being an uncommonly husky and athletic young person, sang only of death, despair and broken hearts. The last, despite the fact that I was very proud of being AN ATHEIST (in large letters) I called loudly upon Heaven to heal.

I was all for strong words, I recall, and had a vocabulary like a pirate's. So-boss and Co-boss were no longer among those present. Here is the quatrain. It is terrible.

She had lived such a miserable life
 As undesired daughter, unloved wife,
 That when Death claimed her as his love and bride
 She hesitated—fearing lest he lied.

Oh, very, very Russian!

For this I received two dollars from *Lippincott's* and much ridicule from a frivolous and unappreciative family.

ELEANOR GATES

My inspiration was, I remember, *The Youth's Companion*. It reached the ranch every few weeks, tied in a big bundle made up of many issues, and was to me in the nature of a literary spree, for my father, with old-fashioned ideas, kept me pretty strictly to the more classic type of reading-matter. So loving *The Companion* as I did, naturally enough I came to aspire to its pages; and when I had dashed off my initial effort, what was there better to do than try it on the teacher? (I looked for no sympathy at home.)

The teacher and I were not on the best of terms. He was a Swede, tow-headed and milky-eyed. And he loathed me because when he mispronounced words, which he often did, I promptly corrected him—a bit of daring that more than once came near to costing me a public spanking. (It was the year I was eight.) So I was not submitting my story to him with the thought that he could help me any. No, indeed. I was simply hoping to fill him with envy.

The story started off in a most unaffected fashion:

“For a long time Mr. Hank Hayes has been promising me that he would let me ride his big gray stallion. So yesterday I went over to his house, and he led the horse out. ‘I’m afraid you’re going to break your neck,’ he said. But I was not afraid. The gray stallion has dapples on his hair, and he jumped around awful when I got on. Then away he galloped.”

The tale wound on in my best blood-curdling style, culled from Cooper, with simplifications. I told how I swam sloughs and leaped coulées, raised the scalps on people’s heads, and—subdued the mammoth gray, bringing him back on the Hayes ranch dripping but still dancing, whereupon Mr. and Mrs. Hayes rendered to me both praise and cookies in which were caraway seeds.

The teacher was boarding with us that week, and under the pretense of examining my masterpiece more at his leisure,

he brought the thing home in his pocket; then with characteristic (almost brotherly) treachery, he showed it to that paragon of all the virtues, that censor of everything sisterly, my brother Will.

With unconcealed horror and rage Will read my tale. Then he launched into such a storm of blame—against me, against Mr. Hayes, and against Mrs. Hayes—and into such wild threats as to what he intended to say to my mother, that without further delay the author crawled under the sitting-room bed.

From there, lying on my back, with my freckled nose full of goose down, I marked the too-soon entrance of my mother; heard Will break out into his excited tattling; caught the rustle of paper as my story changed hands—all the while scarcely daring to breathe.

"If it's all so," vowed the eldest-born, "then she ought to be licked! And if it ain't so, then it's a lie! And she's under the bed, Ma." Then to me, "Oh, you'd better hide! You're goin' to catch it!"

I crawled out. I was trembling with fear. The red of shame suffused my small countenance. Never since have I regretted a literary effort more. As I advanced I expected to be shaken and switched.

What happened however was very different from my expectations—also it was far-reaching in its effect, and regrettable. For my mother smiled upon me, held out a welcoming hand, and drew me to her knee. "So!" she said—and I could see that she was proud about something. "So! We've got a writer in the family!"

And the harm was done.

By the time I was eleven I was writing freely, but, thanks to that stern and scoffing critic, my eldest brother, I was submitting no material. One of these early opera begins thus: "There were two women in the room, and both were dead"—which shows that I was then passing through that period of too-young literary effort always recognizable by the exalting of the ultra-morbid. Fortunately I came through it safely.

Fortunately, also, a man whom I met—I was still at an age when my hair was forever getting snagged on the buttons on the back of my pinafore—gave me some precious advice which (astonishing as it may seem) I took. It was this: "Write, write, write. Get the habit of writing. But! Put it all away. And read, read, read. Don't try to sell anything till you're grown up."

At twenty-four I found myself a junior "special" at the University, where I was merrily flunking in all my courses, due to the fact that I was reading everything except what I should have read; due, also to the other fact that I was writing *My Maiden Dramatic Effort*, a play called "Gentle Miss Gillette," which was produced at the Macdonough Theatre, Oakland, California. When my "The Poor Little Rich Girl" opened at the Hudson Theatre, New York, it was presumed to be my first dramatic attempt. But between these two plays, during the eleven years intervening, I had collaborated on several.

After that first, and dramatic, work, I allowed myself to be deflected to literary stuff of another kind. Finding all my early stories unutterably awful, I burned them and wrote a new one, called "Badgy." I offered it to *The Century Magazine*. They bought it. That was my first sale. And "Badgy" became a chapter of my Maiden Book, "The Biography of a Prairie Girl."

KATHARINE FULLERTON GEROULD

The history of my first published short story is academic and uneventful. At the time when I graduated from Radcliffe, *The Century* was offering three prizes annually for the best short story, the best essay, the best poem respectively, by a young man or woman who had graduated within the previous year from an American college or university. My story "The Poppies in the Wheat" won the short story prize for college graduates of 1900.

After that, it was many a year before I published fiction again. Not, in fact, until 1911, when *Scribner's* printed

“Vain Oblations.” Which is very distinctly “another story.” The history of that would be more interesting, perhaps, but, as I have been asked rigidly for my first published story, I am restricted to “The Poppies in the Wheat,” published by *The Century* in January, 1902.

Yet, as I think of it, I am not sorry; for I wonder if of late years our young writers with purely academic training have not been over-much discouraged by the success and fame of those who have had no formal training at all. We are perhaps too much in danger of thinking that a college curriculum is deadening, and that the sole power to “write” is found among people who have never learned any of the laws of rhetoric. Dick (in “The Light That Failed”) spoke for more than his own time and craft when he said: “I sold every shred of canvas I wanted to; and, on my word, I believe it was because they believed I was a self-taught flagstone artist. I should have got better prices if I had worked my things on wool or scratched them on camel-bone instead of using mere black and white and color.” It would be as absurd as graceless to hold myself up as an example of what academic training can do, for academic training has turned out far better writers than I can ever hope to be. But for the privilege of being included in this volume, I must about-face, look back across the years and salute Harvard English.

Any one who was young in the late nineties “dates.” But those are days one does not forget. Under that blessed free elective system—now gone forever—other liberties than the mere selection of courses were wisely granted to the obstreperous and earnest. In my sophomore year I entered a protest, in a daily theme, against Procrustes; I said I could not write the narratives so wickedly demanded of me. Six fortnightly themes, *connected*; that meant a story; and I had no interest in stories. I cared only for sentence-structure; and sentence-structure, it seemed to a somewhat astigmatic sophomore, could be practised best in descriptive writing.

Woe to those who ever thought they could protect a grievance under the ironic eye of Lewis Edward Gates—that brilliant critic, and great teacher of English Composition. “Very well; write six connected descriptions. You misunderstood, if you thought you had to write narrative.” Thus my grievance collapsed. All through the Spring of 1898, I listened to my sentences as though my pen had been not a pen but a lute. I wrote better sentences then than I do now. So, a sophomore, I scorned the short story with all the scorn nineteen can muster. I cared only for cadences.

But in September, 1898, something to me tremendous happened. I read “What Maisie Knew,” and on top of it, “The Portrait of a Lady.” Thereafter for many months I read nothing for mere pleasure but Henry James. There was no trouble then about writing stories. They were the only thing I wanted to write. All through my junior and senior years I kept at it. And the same critic who had laughed at my sophomore scorn laughed at my senior enthusiasm. “At present”—it was the last word of official criticism I ever had on my work—“you are too completely imitative of Henry James to be taken seriously.”

I wrote “The Poppies in the Wheat” while still “too imitative of Henry James to be taken seriously.” I did not consider that I was imitating the Master. Simply, he was the only thing that had ever made me want to write fiction, that made me see life in plots. He was a drug, not a model—though I doubt not the effect was the same. And still, across the years, together with those damning words during my senior year from Mr. Gates, ring others from Henry James himself, to whom my oldest brother, his friend, had sent the “Poppies.” “Am I so much that *as* that?

. . . She may see, a little, where she’s going; but I see where she’s *coming*, and oh! the dangers scare me. The great white light awaits to engulf her—and she mustn’t be engulfed. She must splash and scramble and remount the current . . . ” It is years upon years since I have drawn that letter from its safe harbor among old and precious papers, but I do not forget the words.

For nearly one rounded decade I obeyed the warnings. I wrote only occasional beginnings of things; I published nothing. I had passed straight from Radcliffe to be an "English Reader" at Bryn Mawr; and I think you do not write of an evening when you have been correcting themes all day. My friends always intended me to write—as, until I was one-and-twenty, I had always since infancy intended to. But the power of "You are too imitative," etc., was strong upon me, all those years after graduation. I fancy the day I wrote—and finished—"Vain Oblations," in an ancient convent in Touraine, my strongest inner comment on my own tale was: "It's *not* imitative of Henry James—that I'll bet on." Even so do words register themselves for better or worse on young minds.

There is, alas! nothing dramatic in this account of my maiden effort. It was precluded to by three or four years of good stiff work in "composition" courses. The accidental success of "The Poppies in the Wheat" did not suffice to obliterate that damning sentence about being too imitative. I think now that that was a good thing and I am glad that the words had such discouraging power over me. Perhaps to have one's manuscripts batted about among the editors of magazines is a good lesson in what will "get across." I have never found it so. I still remain entirely unilluminated by the acceptances and refusals of editorial critics. The most constructive and enlightening criticism I have ever had on my short stories has been academic—for I have been fortunate enough these latter years to have once more a professor of English to refer to.

When I read contemporary advice to contemporary writers, I realize that all of it which is really valuable I heard long ago from the Harvard English Department; from Gates and Gardiner, from Copeland and Hurlburt. As I look back on my own undergraduate days, at a long period of teaching Bryn Mawr students, at years of sympathetically watching the work of Princeton undergraduates, I seem to notice that the best creative work is not apt to be turned out by the student who adapts himself most easily to the

curriculum. Those who do best are often rebels against requirements and red tape. Yeast, I suppose, "working."

Yet even for the rebel the red tape is doubtless a good thing, for it puts him on the defensive. To justify his restiveness, he must do his damndest. To get allowances made for his vagaries he must deliver the goods. No one is more glad for goods delivered than the impartial academic critic who has no game to play, no public to placate or stimulate except the hypothetical public of intelligent readers unbiassed by momentary prejudice. No one is more conscious that, if you have the root of the matter, life and hard work will do the rest. No one is more keenly aware than the good academic critic whether or not the root of the matter is there.

No, it isn't thrilling; but it is true.

MONTAGUE GLASS

Its name was "Papagallo" and I wrote it in the office of an attorney who could not support the tedium of waiting for clients that never came, without taking an occasional drink in the café-restaurant downstairs. On these visits I wrote "Papagallo"—in brief installments and at long intervals, because in the beginning he was fairly abstemious. Just before I left him, however, he was hopelessly addicted to what we call, in the New Rochelle No-L'cense Campaign, the liquor habit, and I got quite a lot of work done on my stories. Had I remained until he was confined to his bed with delirium tremens or cirrhosis of the liver, I might have turned out a couple of three-volume novels; but toward the last, he never paid me and neither did my stories.

So I found a job with a firm of hustling lawyers, who were cold sober in and out of office hours. The stand they took on the literary aspirations of their clerks might be summed up in the story of the London grocer who caught his assistant in the barber shop when he ought to have been behind the grocery counter.

"'Ave your 'air cut in your *own* time, not *mine*," the grocer said.

"Well, it *grew* in *your* time, didn't it?" the assistant said.

But I was never very good at repartee so I devoted my working hours to work, not literary work, and utilized the firm's legal size envelopes for sending out the manuscripts that I already had in stock.

"Papagallo" cost me and that law firm, between us, several dollars in postage stamps, and at last I disposed of it to a Canadian paper for a trifle less than the law firm and I spent on it. It was a fairly bad story, written after the manner of Edgar Allan Poe, with just a suggestion of James Matthew Barrie.

Many years later I reprinted it in a magazine called *1910*, a purely artistic enterprise fostered by Charles B. Falls. It had no editor and no publisher—only contributors who agreed to furnish a story, an article or a picture each month during the year 1910, and ten dollars toward the cost of printing the magazine. In May, 1910, I went to Italy, and I never definitely knew what became of *1910* which ceased publication while I was abroad, but I *think* I can tell what happened to it. It died of a story called "Papagallo."

ROBERT GRANT

My sufferings in breaking into print were negligible; I had luck.

But I had a few experiences on the way. I must have had some natural propensity to write, for in my early teens it was my favorite practice to pace the floor rapidly with a thumb-worn book or card and carry on a fictitious story under my breath, generally concerned with the Civil War.

Shy of observation, I was rarely overheard; but one gem: "The cat laid an egg" was treasured in the family, and revealed more imagination than anything I have been guilty of since.

A little later the discovery that I could write verse was forced upon me by fate in this wise:

Asked to make a written translation of a passage from Ovid, I conceived the idea that because the Latin poetry began with capitals my prose should follow suit, with the result that my teacher thought I was attempting poetry and patted me on the back. This led to real attempts so far successful that I won prizes, including a real prize—only a second prize—for a poem “The Ocean,” before I left school.

I think my real maiden effort was in *The Harvard Advocate*, to which as a Freshman, I sent with trepidation some mediocre verses entitled “Christmas,” the acceptance of which made me very happy.

I have never pretended to be a poet, but versifying comes fairly easy when I am in the vein, and I soon abandoned the serious muse in whose service I was merely commonplace for her ironic cousin. *The Harvard Advocate*, and, later, *The Harvard Lampoon*, provided me with the medium for numerous poetic skits, and while in the Law School I perpetrated “The Little Tin Gods-on-Wheels” or “Society in Our Modern Athens” to illustrations by Frank Attwood, which was presently republished as a brochure by Sever, the Cambridge bookseller, and became popular.

From first to last I have lived a double life, for my writing has been done in the intervals of law practice; and for the last twenty-seven years of judicial duties, so to be consistent, I became Assistant Editor to Dr. Edward Everett Hale on *Old and New* during my apprenticeship at the bar. In its pages I was able to print some more sardonic rhymes without hindrance.

Old and New had a blue cover, but its life was short; and as by this time I had set up a law office of my own, I busied myself for six months while waiting for clients with “The Confessions of a Frivolous Girl,” the manuscript of which I carried to a local bookseller.

He was eager to publish it but invited me to assume the risk which, fortunately for me, I did. It sold like hot cakes and presently, on the strength of this I sold three novels

“short” to a Boston publisher at what seemed to me a large price, but which would have been very small had they turned out big sellers. I tried my best, but I was feeling my way, serving my apprenticeship, as it were, *ex post facto*.

The first of the three appeared serially in *The Century Magazine*, and before the last was finished the publisher became bankrupt. But I kept on and from this time forward knew no rebuffs from editors. Nothing I wrote, with the single exception of some sentimental verses under a *nom de guerre*, was ever returned for many years to come. As I said to begin with, I had great luck. I have never known the discipline of literary adversity. It is only the public that has been made suffer.

ANNA KATHARINE GREEN

Before I could write I got amusement out of telling stories to myself. After I learned to write I scribbled stories on the margins of my school books during class hours. With my childhood mates I got out a paper in imitation of a Buffalo journal.

Later I took to versifying. This developed into my taking up the writing of verse. As I write, a letter of Emerson lies before me in which he was good enough to offer me valuable suggestions in that line. Applying his advice to my subsequent work, I wrote the poetry that is collected in the volume “The Defense of the Bride.” This volume, however, found no publisher until after my first prose work was out.

My mother had a practical mind and told me I had better make an effort to write prose. This I later decided to do, having an understanding with myself that if I did so the story should be one of plot.

An idea or a combination of ideas came to me that eventually grew into “The Leavenworth Case,” a volume of 123,000 words, nearly costing me my health. It was written on all and any kind of paper, purchased wherever I happened to be. It was written in hotel rooms, trains, steamboats, notes made even in street cars and on ferry-boats.

The result was an enormous mass of manuscript, such as probably no reader before ever had to encounter.

It never had to be submitted to more than one publisher. Mr. George Haven Putnam has often told how a young woman came to his office with a strange-looking parcel held in a shawl-strap. He said it was a "formidable-looking mass." I left the "mass" with him. After passing a period of anxiety as to what his decision might be, he asked me to call on him.

At that interview he told me that the story was "good but very long"; that it would have to be shortened by 30,000 words. I had thought that every word I had written was of vital importance and his statement nearly took away my breath, for I had in mind the drawers full of manuscript that I had already voluntarily discarded in the ceaseless writing and re-writing of its chapters. However, I had faith in my work and deferred to the house of Putnam.

I cut out, with infinite labor, 25,000 words, thinking that now all would be clear sailing. But this was not so. When I saw Mr. Putnam again he said: "Now, Miss Green, there is one other thing necessary. I have arranged with Rossiter Johnson to hear you read that story to him. If his decision is favorable we will publish the book, long as it is."

This proved to be an ordeal that I shall never forget.

Mr. Johnson came to my home in Brooklyn. I commenced reading to him on Saturday and read way into the night. When I finished reading the first half I did not know whether the impression I had made was favorable or not.

As I read Mr. Johnson sat with closed eyes, opening them only at the end of a chapter, to say "*Another?*"

The Sunday came and I dreaded it. After breakfast the reading was resumed and continued into the late night, when Mr. Johnson left for his home. With the exception of what he said on coming and going, the only word he spoke was that word "*Another?*" which to me might mean anything I chose to think. But I hoped for the best. The coming of the postman was watched for eagerly, and after

several days of anxiety the letter came, saying that Mr. Johnson's report was very favorable, and would I call at the office to sign a contract.

This was my maiden effort. By the publication of "The Leavenworth Case" I became an author. In time the book was translated into several languages; but the praise bestowed on it by that master of plot, Wilkie Collins, is perhaps the greatest satisfaction of all.

If I had not been asked to write the above it is possible that in time I might even forget the repetition of the word "*Another?*" I question now, however, if I ever shall. But "all's well that ends well."

ZANE GREY

My first literary effort was consummated when I was about fourteen years old at the home where I was born in Zanesville, Ohio. Not improbably the circumstances attending the writing of this piece will be recognized by other writers as authentic and natural, unless they have never been boys.

I belonged to a gang of young ruffians, or rather I was the organizer and leader of a band of youthful desperadoes who were bound to secrecy by oaths and the letting of blood. In the back of our orchard there was a thick briar patch, in the middle of which was concealed the entrance to a cave. We had dug this cave at opportune hours during the day or night, packing away the dirt in sacks. The entrance was just large enough to squeeze into, but below we had two good-sized rooms, all boarded up, with walls plastered with pictures and decorated with skins, hand-made weapons, and utensils we had filched from our respective homes. We had a lamp that never burned right and a stone fireplace that did not draw well.

Here we congregated at different times to divide the spoils of some boyish raid, or to eat the watermelons or grapes we had stolen, or to feast on some neighbor's chicken. We boiled the chickens in a pot that my mother was always searching for but never found.

Sometimes, too, when the neighborhood had become suddenly aroused over incidents that to us were trivial, we repaired to our cave to hide. Once we slept there all night, or at least stayed there, and each boy was supposed to have spent the night at the home of another boy. This, to our great joy, was never found out. We had a complete collection of *Beadle's Dime Library* and some of Harry Castleman's books, the reading of which could only be earned by a deed of valor.

In this cave I wrote my first story. I wrote it on pieces of wall paper, not all of which were even in size. I slaved and sweat over this story, and smarted too, for the smoke always got into my eyes. It was hard to write because the boys whispered with heads together—some bloody story—some dark deed they contemplated against those we hated—some wild plan.

But at last I finished it. The title was "Jim of the Cave." That title made a hit with all but the member in whose honor it was created. I read it with voice not always steady nor clear. It had to do with a gang of misunderstood boys, a girl with light hair and blue eyes, dark nights, secrets, fight, blood, and sudden death. Jim, the hero, did not get the light-haired girl. For that matter none of the gang got her, because none of them survived.

My early perceptions were not infallible. In spite of my love for Jim, he could not be made a real honest-Injun hero. It was through his perfidy that our secret was discovered. He had broken one of our laws and was temporarily suspended. He chose a time when we were all in the cave regaling ourselves with another chicken, and he brought my father to the entrance of our hiding-place. We had to tear off the board roof and bring to light all we had stolen, and then fill up the hole. Thus my father got possession of "Jim of the Cave." Perhaps when he consigned it to the flames he had no divination of its priceless value. And he licked me with a strip of Brussels carpet which he found in the cave. What I did to the Judas of our clan was similar in part to the story he had inspired. In real life

he grew up, passed me by with stony stare, and married the light-haired girl.

The first of my work to see print in book form was written years afterward.

I had always yearned to write, but in the early years I did not know it and there was no one to tell me. In college I could not attend to lectures. My mind wandered. My dreams persisted. I used to go into the great silent library of the University of Pennsylvania and sit there, feeling a vague peace, and the stirring of inward force that afterward drove me to write.

When I graduated I went to New York to practice my profession. Here, as in college, I dreamed—my mind wandered to the hills and vales—to adventure. During my brief vacations I got as far away from the city as possible, and began writing the tales of fishing and canoeing experiences. These passed muster in some of the outdoor magazines.

Then came the ambition to write a book. I chose the story of Elizabeth Zane, sister of Colonel Ebenezer Zane, my great-great-grandfather who held Fort Henry for twenty years against the Indians and British. During the last siege, September 11, 1782, Betty Zane saved the fort by running the gauntlet of fire, carrying an apron full of gunpowder over her shoulder. My mother first told me this story, and then I heard it and read it afterwards a thousand times. When I saw it in the Fourth Reader I thrilled with pride.

I wrote "Betty Zane" in a dingy flat, on a kitchen table, under a flickering light. All of one winter I labored over it, suffered, and hoped, was lifted up and anon plunged into despair. When it was finished I took it to Scribner's who returned it with their printed slip—then to Doubleday, where Lanier damned it with faint praise—then to Harper's, where Hitchcock's verdict was that he did not see anything in it to convince him that I could write. And so I peddled "Betty Zane" from one publisher to another. All in vain!

I had no money. My future looked black. And when

all seemed the blackest and my spirit was low I re-read "Betty Zane" and swore they were wrong.

I borrowed money to publish my work. No publisher would bring it out, so I hired a printer to print it.

And at last I had a book in my hands—a book that I had written! It changed my life. I gave up my profession and went to the country to live and write. My father was distressed. He hated to have me give up my livelihood. But after I sent him "Betty Zane" he read it almost as much as he read his favorite book, the Bible. "Betty Zane" received unhopd for praise from the Press, but it sold slowly, for the printer could not get it before the public. And eventually I bought the plates.

Every year now "Betty Zane," in spite of its crudities, sells more and more. I never changed a line of it. And in these days of the H. C. L. old "Betty" helps nobly to keep the wolf from the door.

ARTHUR GUITERMAN

It is pretty hard for an incorrigible writer of verse to recapture his first fine careless rapture from the mists of infancy, the chances being that he lisped in numbers.

To the best of my recollection my maiden effort (written at the age of six or seven and in orthodox fashion with a stub of pencil on a scrap of wrapping paper), was a nature lyric entitled "Fireflies." While it lacked distinction and originality, still it coupled "dancing" and prancing," thus evidencing that bent toward the complexities of rhyme that has earned the author the scorn of those to whom rhyming is a vice even baser than the use of rhythm.

My first effort appearing in a publication of general circulation was a ballad called "The Palisades," telling the Indian legend of the origin of the great cliffs on the western shore of the Hudson, and voicing a protest against their desecration.

The reprinting of this ballad in the *New York Times* resulted in my becoming a frequent though at that time an unpaid contributor to the paper.

I feel quite antique when I reflect that I was a pioneer in what is really free verse—verse devoid of artificialities in thought, theme, or language, in which the singer's lyric impulse is allowed its natural rhythmic expression, unhampered by the conventional irregularities and studied prose effects that custom may demand. But the magazines of the eighteen-nineties didn't want my verse; and the newspapers that seemed glad enough to have it had not yet been educated to the point of paying for such material.

Still, I recall without regret that I was none the richer for having written such ballads as "The Call to the Colors" and "The Rush of the Oregon" that were widely reprinted and gathered into anthologies; for some of this work attracted the notice of at least one generous critic, Mr. J. I. C. Clarke, who later published in his magazine, *The Criterion*, my ballad "The Rough Riders," and sent me the first check that I ever received for a manuscript.

Though that was more than twenty-two years ago, I still owe him thanks for his encouragement, his wise rejections and his discriminating criticisms. He is the best and broadest-minded literary editor I have ever known.

HOLWORTHY HALL

It is a very difficult matter for me to point to any one specific symptom which can be authoritatively set down as a maiden effort, because in various methods and at various times I have committed as many different maiden efforts as Ramona established homesteads or as General Washington established headquarters. And as Ramona provided for the tourist, and as Washington provided for the historian, so have I provided for the biographer. You pay your money (or borrow this book from a *bona fide* purchaser) and take your choice.

The earliest evidence I have of any tendency towards fiction is in the form of a story of the Civil War which I produced at the age of eight.

A few years later I was a local correspondent in Maine for a resort newspaper and received a free subscription in return for little items about neighborhood affairs at which a pleasant time was reported as having been had by all; and now and then I produced, for no additional stipend, a short story of four or five hundred words in which there was always at least one death from natural causes, and usually a gratuitous murder. When I was fifteen I was writing society drama for a school paper and detective stories for a real newspaper; and I can truthfully claim that neither kind was very much worse than the other.

When I was in college, I was writing fiction for what we supposed to be a "literary" magazine, and in my junior year I had sold chemically pure fiction to a monthly magazine whose editor wrote me several beautiful letters to explain why my check was delayed. Once the treasurer had gone out of town, and once the auditor had failed to pass the item; but the only explanation which was thoroughly convincing came from the Receiver, who eventually sent me the munificent sum of \$1.38. Perhaps I was fortunate to escape without an assessment.

It is perfectly apparent, then, that I have been guilty of a large number of maiden efforts. My "first printed work" ought not to be admitted to full standing in this symposium, because it was printed at my father's expense. My next printed work was probably a mystery story to the effect that "Mr. Jackson Springs has gone to Portland, Maine, for the week-end. Look out for him, girls!" My next successively printed works were he-and-she jokes and short stories which were so very short that they would almost do for subtitles to a motion picture.

I therefore take the liberty of claiming as a maiden effort the first story which I ever wrote with the deliberate intention of selling it, if possible, and the additional hope of getting paid for it.

When I was eight years old I wanted to learn to play the piano, but at that particular time, and in that particular region, it was considered highly effeminate for a boy to tamper with anything more musical than a xylophone. For the next ten years I tried to coerce music out of any hollow or resonant substance, and in time I became an efficient soloist on the mandolin and ocarina (or sweet potato) and the double bass (or dog-house). Nevertheless, I continued to grieve that I couldn't play the piano and whenever I had a chance I always went to hear the great concert pianists in action, and would imagine how wonderful it would be to save barber bills and to make nice old ladies snivel into their handkerchiefs and talk nuances.

It then occurred to me that I should heap coals of fire upon the heads of my parents—and after the heaping, thoroughly massage their craniums with the hot embers, or in other words, rub it in—if I should take piano lessons secretly and pay for them out of my allowance, and become a prodigy. Then, on some beautiful summer evening, when the balmy air and the moonlight and the mosquitoes were coming through the windows, I should sit down at the keyboard and play Chopin's Nocturne, and knock 'em off their seats.

So I took three lessons; but after the third lesson my current appropriation of nine dollars was entirely exhausted.

When I went to bed that night I was thinking entirely in terms of musical genius, and I remember saying to myself that I would cheerfully give \$1,000,000 (against which I should expect credit for the \$9 already expended) if I could play the Marche Militaire of Schubert as well as I wanted to.

That night I dreamed that I walked into the living room and sat down at the piano and played the Marche Militaire, while Paderewski listened, and eventually took off his diamond belt, emblematic of the world's heavy-weight piano championship, and gave it to me. I don't recall that we agreed to split the motion picture rights but we probably did.

For at least a week I dreamed this same incident, with

variations, sometimes serious and sometimes burlesque. I am afraid to buy Freud's best-known book, because it will probably tell me some fearful things about these ancient facts. Nevertheless, I went on dreaming about this same piece of music until it occurred to me that I had the basis of a story.

I began to write this story one Saturday morning, and when I finished the first draft I was astounded to discover that it was midnight. I had broken a dinner engagement, and, more than that, I had stayed away from the Dartmouth football game, which at that time, in Cambridge, was second in importance only to the Yale game. This was to me the first indication that a man could be sufficiently interested in writing fiction to make sacrifices for it, whether they were voluntary or involuntary, conscious or unconscious.

It is absolutely no use in concealing the identity of the editor who bought this story. Bob Davis bought it and published it in *The Scrap-Book* for May, 1910, and, furthermore, he distinguished it by two-color illustrations. I might add that he distinguished in similar fashion the work of all other authors in the book.

The story, as I wrote it, was about an uncouth individual who was studying for his Ph. D. in psychology, and had worked himself up to the verge of nervous prostration in preparing his thesis, which was entitled "The Rôle of Vision in the Mental Life of the Mouse." Just as his own mentality departed from him, he apparently received the spirit of the late Schubert, and, from his previous status as a music-loather, he became, for a brief interval, a virtuoso. Then, when he had knocked 'em off their seats (you observe that, in a sense, he was simply acting as my substitute) he expired, while the chorus, off right, sang the Stein Song—and then there were some leads, and the magazine continued, from the previous issue, the history of "Tewksbury, King of the Plungers."

When the editors of *The Scrap-Book* bought this story they made only one definite criticism of it. They stated that the title of the hero's thesis was too silly for such a tragic

narrative. Unfortunately, I had borrowed the title of the thesis from one actually written in the previous year by a gentleman who got his Ph. D. for it at perhaps our most intellectual university. But they paid me twenty-five dollars for the story, and I took the twenty-five dollars into a poker game and made a hundred and fifty, and decided to be an author.

COSMO HAMILTON

If the real reason were ever given as to why men take to writing I don't think it would be always because of a virulent attack of *cacoethes scribendi*.

So far as I know men become writers and attach themselves to a career which is probably the most precarious, heart-breaking, difficult and nerve racking of all possible careers by accident, except in those few cases when authorship is inherited like horsemanship, or playing golf left handed.

In my case, if it can be called a case, the *cacoethes* seized me in a moment of extreme boredom when I was staying at a farmhouse in Normandy in a gorgeous summer away back before the great war.

At that time a career was being forced upon me which did not appeal to my precocious mind,—a career of diplomacy which seemed to me to spell nothing better, at any rate in its early stages, than acting the part of a glossy manservant and writing out invitations to specially chosen people to attend the functions of the wife of a British ambassador.

At the tail of my teens I had retired to this haven of refuge to gather sufficient courage to put up a fight against the wishes of my father and to endeavor to find some way to show him that I could earn a living in my own manner which was, of course, not his. Hay-making was on, and the good people of the farm were out and about every morning shortly after daybreak making the best of the sun. At night they retired to bed with the birds, leaving me lonely and stranded at the early hour of eight.

It so happened that I had with me a slim, red volume of the Autonym Library, called "Some Emotions and a Moral," by John Oliver Hobbes. It was the only book that I had taken with me from London and I read it over and over again. It contained no more than forty thousand words and was touched with the most charming satire, and seemed to have been written as easily as falling off a log.

Bored stiff, and with the audacity which only belongs to us before we are twenty-one, I sat down when the village was asleep to write a book of the same length, which should be just as good and possibly very much better.

I began by setting a theorem which ran as follows:

"Being as they were, it was quite impossible for them to have done otherwise than as they did . . . which is absurd."

Having got as far as this and beginning to enjoy myself thoroughly I seized hold of a big bundle of thin foreign note paper and settled to work to write a story about the British Army in India, of which I knew absolutely nothing.

I took a cockney sergeant who was in love with a maid-servant in the household of the colonel and I made two young subalterns fake the necessary papers to show that he had inherited an earldom. They did this deed to revenge themselves upon the colonel's lady and her two daughters for their snobbishness, and having got the sergeant thoroughly settled into the colonel's house as an honored guest with the two daughters fighting to become his wife I made them declare their fake, and, in what I supposed to be a moment of great drama, bring humiliation and consternation upon these typical snobs. It was very green stuff which I imagined to be extremely subtle satire and I called it "Which is Absurd."

Having got this thing out of my system and killed many a dull evening in doing so, I sent it to the publisher of the Autonym Library with the following note:

“Sir: I have the pleasure to send you herewith, untyped, a novel for your famous library which will either kill it stone dead or make it even more famous than it is. My address for the next ten days is c/o Madame Dusquesne, Claire, Seine-Inférieure, France, after which it will be Grand Hotel, Dieppe.”

Parcels post took this effort over to England and I thereupon forgot it; but after having been three days at Dieppe, where I was spending the last of my money punting on the races and on the tables at the casino with a laudable idea, so seldom realized, of making a small fortune, I received a telegram from the publisher in question asking me to show up at my earliest convenience.

Imagine my excitement and confusion. I saw myself at once half way up the ladder which leads to literary fame and able to approach my father in Whitehall in an independent spirit which would fill him both with pride and annoyance.

I rushed to England, making the night boat go twice its ordinary speed, sleepless and deeply stirred. Arrived at my rooms in Westminster, which were under the eaves of the Abbey, I dug out a top hat, a very daring tie, a coat of great respectability and, if I must confess it, a pair of spats.

I got into all this rig, hailed a hansom and drove to the purlieu of Paternoster Row.

But the effect which I intended to get by dashing up to the publisher's office behind a prancing horse was utterly lost. Paternoster Row was too narrow for my entrance and the cab had to be left at the top of the street.

Nevertheless, I made a brave pounce upon a dirty-nosed office boy and ordered him to send in my name to Mr. Fisher Unwin. He ran his eyes over me with the utmost contempt and merely transferred a lump of toffee from one cheek to another. Eventually I persuaded him to take in my name, was kept waiting for three quarters of an hour, while my feet became very cold, and at last was shown into a

book-lined room in which, at a very formidable desk, sat a gentleman who looked like a patriarch, whose eyes were cynical and whose beard was long.

"Good God!" said he,—which didn't seem to me to be a good beginning—and then after a gasp of amazement at my juvenile appearance continued, "Are you the man who wrote 'Which is Absurd.'"

"Yes, sir," said I, puffing out my chest.

He burst out laughing. I refrained from pulling his beard with great difficulty and remained standing in an attitude of what I took to be immense literary dignity.

The end of it was that instead of receiving a check for a thousand pounds, as I supposed I should, having heard that Hall Caine lived in a castle, I left Paternoster Row with a ten-pound note in my pocket and a contract which guaranteed the publication of the book in the Autonym Library within six months.

I marked time till its appearance, my father having very kindly agreed to give me a chance in this line of work, wrote about three other books in the interval, equally bad, and on the day of its publication, which was to me worthy of ranking with some of the greatest days in the history of my country, I was introduced to Jerome K. Jerome who was then editing a weekly paper in which books were reviewed. He promised to review mine at once and this is what he wrote.

"Which is Absurd," by Cosmo Hamilton (Autonym Library, Fisher Unwin) Quite so.

But I went on writing and now look at the damned thing!

ISABEL F. HAPGOOD

Did I ever have a "Maiden Effort"? I wonder! In any case, I am afraid it must be classified under the head of "Mixed Pickles," rather than as one of the recognized fifty-seven (million) varieties so well known and popular in all properly regulated households.

There was a Church Bazaar. One of the accompanying schemes, warranted to prove a first-rate pocket-corkscrew (if, ignoring the Tennysonian rule that "a Sorrow's crown of sorrows is remembering happier things" I may venture to set down this word of sad significance) for the extraction of reluctant coin was a little special paper called "The Christmas Holly," or something equally pointed. The President of a Young People's Club was, ex-officio, Editor-in-Chief; also, she was congenitally unsuited for any form of literary activity, but had never had that fact called to her attention. I, a tactless member of the staff, mildly objected to her "leader," saying that it would not do; and that "anyone could write a better editorial than that," when she failed to perceive why. Thereupon, she retorted, with a degree of energy appropriate to Missouri rather than to Massachusetts, where the lamentable incident occurred: "Show me!"

I did. The Committee rejected her offering and printed mine. Then the fun began, obviously at the wrong point for dramatic effects. The Rector demanded the name of the writer, and got a refusal. He remarked, loftily, that he did not need to be told; his Curate had written it. When laughed at, he waxed crimson and angry and asserted that it certainly had been written by the Curate—or by some one with a mind exactly like his, or who had been a close companion of his. Wild laughter—because every one knew that I was the one girl in the parish who had kept out of the way of the handsome, supercilious and much run-after Curate. Also, more wrath on the part of the Rector: and on mine; for my style was, as I hoped it still is, clear-cut and direct to a reasonable degree. Whereas the Curate had recently set the parish by the ears through a sermon of his customary flowery pattern.

He had tried to say that the career of St. Paul had turned out as different from what it would have been, had he continued the line he originally pursued as Saul, as are the courses and mouths of the Mississippi and the St. Lawrence

Rivers which, starting from practically the same point, flow as far apart and wind up at about as diametrically opposite points as could well be devised. That sermon sent the congregation to their New Testaments; for one half insisted that he said St. Paul was born on the banks of the Mississippi while the other half swore that he had assigned the Saint's birthplace to the banks of the St. Lawrence.

I had never heard the man in lighter vein than a sermon, had met him about twice; and my editorial was not sermon-like in quality. He died a Bishop, but I still maintain that my mind was never in the least like his.

. . . The same little sheet, hard up for matter, contained four or five other contributions from my pen—all over fictitious names—such as metrical translations from various languages, and an original Sonnet. And with these Mixed Pickles my literary efforts ended. For a number of years I wrote nothing. In other words, I did not even begin to write, in the accepted sense of the word.

My Maiden Effort in a public sense also belongs under the heading of "Mixed Pickles"; this time with the fancy name of "Picalilli," I think. It was my book, "The Epic Songs of Russia," a compilation and translation from obsolete Russian (with some original matter) put into appropriate language where I had to invent adequate terms, as though I had been a poet myself.

That was accepted by the first publisher to whom I offered it. The same was true of all I wrote or translated for a long time thereafter. Later on, I managed to assemble a superb collection of Rejected Addresses, though I made no special effort in that direction, "Maiden" or otherwise, even if that sort of thing does legitimately belong to the profession. Unfortunately, all these came at the wrong point for thrilling dramatic effect in a Literary Career. I may add that that Collection is not for sale, although it contains precious specimens of gold, silver and lead, as do all similar priceless Literary Treasures.

HENRY SYDNOR HARRISON

When I was nineteen and lived in Brooklyn, a friend who was dining with us one evening happened to tell us of a slight misadventure that had befallen him some nights earlier.

The facts were these: He was alone in his house, family away, servants on a holiday; it was late and he was exactly ready for bed save for the donning of his pajamas. Suddenly the doorbell pealed in the still midnight. Having tossed a bathrobe on over next-to-nothing, he descended and opened the door. In the vestibule stood a boy with a telegram. Our friend unthinkingly stepped out into the vestibule, and the door did just what any door of spirit would have done under circumstances; it clicked shut behind him. Our friend was ill-dressed for projecting about; the Brooklyn locksmiths were as I recall it early retirers in those days; and he had a time of it trying to get back into that house again.

I did not know then that nearly everybody has had this adventure, or at least nearly everybody's friend, and I instantaneously thought to myself, "Ah, a story!"

So I wrote the anecdote "up"—more or less—with, I fear, a very thin fictional veneer; and as if myself perceiving that my offering was of journalistic texture rather than pure art, I sent it to the Sunday Editor of *The New York Herald*. I think that was the first place I sent it to but I can't be sure at this late day—at any rate, the *Herald* editor took it. He paid me eleven dollars and some cents and, better than that, he sent me a letter of acceptance which I could frame and did, proving to all beholders that I was of the chosen who put words on paper in such a fashion that they can be exchanged for currency. I kept that framed letter a long time, till at last the suns and winds of many seasons had faded it to a blank white page.

As I remember, that was the first story I ever offered for sale and I sold it and spent the money. A suspicious début! But, alas, the splendid triumphs of youth do not always sus-

tain themselves, and twelve years later my fictions were being rejected right and left.

In the years intervening I had been trying to write, off and on in what leisure I had, with mediocre success, or perhaps a little less. I suppose I wrote twenty-five or thirty short stories in those years and sold about half of them. In the year 1910-1911, however, my time was my own; and in that winter I think I wrote eleven stories. My proficiency, as I saw it, had increased, but my batting average slid downward. Of the eleven, I sold but three.

The situation was a little curious, for at the time I had two book manuscripts accepted for publication; they were both published that Spring; and as the better of them had a considerable vogue in the months following, I very soon found myself in the pleasant position familiar to writers in such circumstances. I had the sensation of tables abruptly and agreeably turned; sweet revenges were in my hand, reprisals, too, if I liked, and sometimes I did like. Such of the old stories as still seemed worth printing were produced from the drawer on terms that would have seemed to me fantastic just a little while before, to say nothing of the gratitude I should have felt earlier but did not feel then, for the "recognition," so yearned for by the neglected.

It was funny enough to get letters asking if I couldn't and wouldn't write stories from magazines which had been rejecting my stories steadily, usually with printed slips, for a long time. And yet it did not seem to me entirely funny, either, and when one editor wrote to me warmly praising and "envying" a published story which he, personally, had rejected the year before, I could only feel that that editor's praises were worth very little, and that, in short, the line had been crossed.

I felt rather strangely about some of these curiosities at the time and my come-backs to my new well-wishers, who had hitherto so successfully dissembled their love, sometimes took a regrettably sarcastic tone. Moreover, wishing to serve the young writer some sort of good turn—at least, I think it was as noble as that—I wrote an account of my

experiences and my changed fortunes for *The Atlantic Monthly*; a bit of self-expression which some of the editors, I am afraid, have never quite forgiven me. They thought that I should have been a good fellow and let bygones be bygones. But my position was that nothing was bygone, particularly, for the solemn truth was that I was the very same fellow in 1911 that I was in 1910, and very much the same writer.

JOSEPH HERGESHEIMER

The students of the earnest school of American "literary" autobiography can have but an overwhelming condemnation for the course which led me to the publication of my books and stories. I am certain that, in addition, they would be affronted. The actual facts are rather an amazing refutation of a number of celebrated "moral truths." Men with a nice sense of performing long-drawn and disagreeable duties will find nothing here to reassure them that virtue is its own reward, or rather that such virtue only is rewarded. The room where I am writing is low with rafters and a wide stone fireplace darkening since 1712; there is old mahogany, early Empire and Heppelwhite, dull rose, the deep blue of Staffordshire china and wrought iron. The windows look out on uninterrupted greenery, maples ruffling in a delightful morning air, and terraced grass. Behind the long low gray stone house the peas are in pod; there is a gardener like a crusted English clay pipe; Aire-dales are on the lawn and communicative brown owls in a willow. From a reasonable angle this is a great deal, it is perfect of its kind, and it is all, all, the result of perversity.

There was hardly a stage in the process of its realization that would not serve as an illustration of the ways that lead to ruin. Practically every young man, who in the lessons comes on disaster, arrives by the route which brought me, under forty, to this verdant tranquillity. In the first place, largely through persistent illness, I spent a complete childhood doing nothing in the world. I did it very well indeed,

in a large mid-Victorian house, with a clashing bell and prayers morning and evening, and walls—the library, the halls, the music-room—lined with distinguished books; every book a successful Scotch Presbyterian type-founder would possess. During this period my mother subscribed for a series of paper-bound love stories.

After a number of pleasant years in the company of the Duchess and a stainless Indian named Deerfoot, I was introduced to school. I was a timid, fattish boy, with an incurable aversion to study and a surpassing clumsiness at games. It was a Quaker school with both girls and boys, and my failure with one was as dismal as with the other. But this didn't last long for, in the consistency I have set out to reveal, at the end of two or perhaps three terms I definitely withdrew myself from the field of education.

Advancing from the Duchess to Ouida, I went on as I had before; at seventeen, I entered an Academy of Fine Arts. There I did one day's work in fifteen, stood, together with other gesticulating thumbs, before the celebrated paintings in the gallery above the schools, and had an affair of the heart. This occupied me until I was twenty-one. Then, with the numerous grandchildren of the Presbyterian type-founder, now unfortunately dead, I received a very satisfactory sum of money. My cousins invested their legacies in industries or discretion; mine I immediately dissipated, mostly in Venice in the country of Italy.

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In the period that followed, I was as convincingly detrimental as any moralist could wish. I kept what is everywhere recognized as low company, and enjoyed most the proprietor of a night-hawk cab.

Then one morning in early October I was leaning a swimming head from my window over an open suburban street, the air sheeted with pale gold and veiled with the pungent haze of burning leaves, when suddenly every aspect of my existence became insupportable. It was as if a voice had shouted in my ear. Within an hour, with a few necessi-

ties like books and chocolate in a glazed bag such as children carry to school, I had left forever all the past circumstances of my life. I went on a walking trip, which consisted in taking a train to Harper's Ferry.

At the station, asking for a hotel, I encountered a woman bound for one on the bluff above and we went up together. She talked civilly, and thoroughly weary of all that I had been, I informed her that I was English, a nephew of Lord Kelvin, the astronomer—the first name that occurred to me. The hotel, except for my companion and an aging but vigorous man, was empty. We had supper at a small table lit with a single lamp in a vast shadowy place of faded summer greens; where it was revealed, as humanely as possible, that the lady was a member of a notable British family and had come to the United States to lecture on the private life of Queen Victoria, and could recognize any nephew of a nobleman across the Potomac; while the other was Simon Newcomb, the celebrated American astronomer, an intimate of Kelvin's, and perhaps the one man on the continent who knew that he had no such relative as I had announced myself to be.

Yet observe the sequel of this reprehensible fabrication—it set in motion a mild entertainment in which I learned that the lecturer was, too, a novelist; she had produced a respectable number of volumes under the pseudonym of Lucas Cleeve; and she had the proofs of one at the hotel. On the day of my arrival her eyes had failed from continual strain and the acidulous smoke of cheap cigarettes; that evening I was correcting her galley proofs, while she sat beside me with her head swathed in a damp towel, emphasizing with the cigarettes what should be noted and changed.

Throughout this process I was conscious of a growing dissatisfaction at her story, with the result that I immediately wrote a novel of my own. Naturally it was nothing more than a rather crude joke at the expense of my labor and hopes. Now, thoroughly engaged, I determined to make a further effort. In the search for a place at once quiet and inexpensive; I took a Virginia mountain stage that put me

down, with a decrepit typewriter, in a little village lost in the midst of deep, narrow, green valleys and high ranges. There, in the detached part of a farmhouse on the slope beyond the village, I addressed myself to the difficulties of creative writing.

If I had had any idea of what was to follow, I would have made a more careful choice of subject, for I was condemned to rewrite over twenty times a trivial affair about a calf, a country girl, and a professor in search of health. In the course of the story the professor accidentally shot the calf . . . the girl he married. The typewriter broke down at the most inconvenient moments, the lettered caps fell off and lodged in inaccessible parts of the mechanism, the type-bars tangled and the ribbon was full of holes. I would, as I thought, finish the story, and get into bed with unutterable satisfaction, only to wake sometime in the night with the realization that I had again made an inexcusable blunder; and the following morning start a fresh page with the title which I have since mercifully forgotten.

It would be difficult to express the depth of my ignorance at that time; I could follow the superficial logic of events, and I had a vague idea, from its appearance, when a sentence was completely wrong. That was the extent of my literary knowledge and background. I spoke of writing this over twenty times, that was the entire story; a great many periods, yes, and paragraphs, were repeated a hundred or more. Eventually I knew the whole dull, stupid business by heart, and recited, with indescribable bitterness, entire pages to the trout I caught in the virgin mountain streams.

Finally I was convinced that I could do no more, and sent the manuscript to a magazine. It returned, but with an encouraging letter, a suggestion to try it with a periodical that specialized in light fiction. Light! It seemed to me the heaviest thing ever created. It was fourteen laborious years later before I sold a story.

Looking again about my pleasant room, this narrative seems incredible. I had left undone nearly everything I

should have done and did, what is agreed, comes to nothing. Even the fourteen years of labor were systematically discouraged, or rather regarded as an ingenious defense of persistent idleness. I had literally nothing to show but baskets of wasted paper and a few printed rejection slips. A relative to whom I said "kind of things," pointed out that a literary ambition was, well—unfortunate. I hadn't read Thackeray and didn't like Dickens, and—major crime—I never looked at the newspapers. An aunt remained awake one entire night because I mentioned Darwin. No education, you see, and no habit of industry, no background of the masters nor corner filled in the family pew; and against this only the scribbling.

Yet the result, the dark rafters and broad hearths, the emerald sod and low eaves echoing with birds, charming blue eyes, is the reward promised for industrious righteousness. There is a drawer full of heartening communications from impressive sources. Solid men in approved vocations admit me to their confidence and society. . . . And only the scribbling.

Asked for explanations by a large class for the study of story writing, I sat in a silent quandary—should I admit the Duchess or tell them of the weeks in Venice, or say at once that any one of them might with great ease prove me an entire ignoramus? The instructor gently prodded me: they want to know about the tricks by which you get effects, he put in. This was not helpful. In self-defense I repeated the history of my first two published novels. One, of which a thousand copies were exempt from royalties, sold nearly nine hundred; the single financial activity connected with the other was the privilege of later buying the copyright and plates.

I was still opposed to both Providence and propriety, for the subject of one novel was a boy's purity—in a world where that quality is a cause for excruciating jest—and the second the failure of an aging man to repair a spiritual wrong with gold. People, I learned, preferred to read of immaculate young women and be reassured concerning the

money to the obtaining of which they sacrificed so much. The earlier indifference gave place to a prodigious amount of advice.

It was continued by the editors who wrote me after a story or so appeared in a highly reputable place. Enthusiastic letters arrived and I answered enthusiastically with manuscripts. The admonitions: our readers demand more optimistic and vital stuff. More action! Mary, the daughter of the wealthy manufacturer, must marry Alfred, the laborer, who at imminent peril bursts open the fire-escape doors locked by the villain and releases the panic-stricken girls in the loft. Still more action, if Alfred is equally the child of a wealthy manufacturer in disguise.

I was, in addition, condemned for dealing with a love slightly different from the eugenic legend of the stork, and for deducing from the movement of women's skirts that they were propelled by legs. Or else I was metaphorically pounded on the back and invited to write, for disturbing sums, gingery serials. Without conviction in either direction, I fell between. It was then discovered by the erudite that my books held actual grammatical errors—infinitives were severed, adjectives crowded in unauthorized procession. These criminal facts were exposed; yet, in spite of them, I saw a novel of mine being read in a Pullman car. In spite of them other publishers appeared and other readers.

Almost nothing can be said in defense of such a career, a composition of wilful idleness and labor, unsupported by any vision of success. It is obviously a provocation to virtue that, as a result, I should be able to smoke very long and very pale brown cigars with an import stamp on the box. I have no business with a fine Airedale terrier named after Mr. Conrad's Marlow, nor a wife with a flapping pink hat and the blue eyes of which I spoke. Remember the lamentable companions—Smith, the night-hawk driver and fallen prize-fighter, the thieves and wasted, the tragic sensualists. Remember all the opportunities ignored—my grandfather's classic library, the education, the money.

If my first novel had been of the "vital" sort people prefer, it might have sold half a million copies instead of nearly nine hundred. That is a consideration; but grass can be only so green, a terrier no more than faithful.

Then there are friends, personal, and friends of my books, to record. They must be the final indignity to the truly worthy. No one has better; I am unable to credit the statement that one gets the friends he deserves.

I have written the last word of another novel, preposterous now in time and setting. It will be published while countless other books written by the most exemplary will be refused, and justly annoyed superiority will endure the strain of again seeing my self-indulgent countenance looking out at them from the pages of their favorite reliable journals.
. . . Tough!

JAMES HOPPER

My maiden effort was two. I am aware of the fact that there is something wrong about this sentence both grammatically and physiologically but, rushing along, have no time to fix it.

Also, these two maiden efforts were the product much less of effort than of a certain cussedness.

Somewhere around the age of fourteen, I fell into a streak of perversity which lasted several years. I, who up to that time had been a good little boy, peaceful and diligent, collecting with regularity report cards full of A's and Ones, and One Hundreds, who occupied the seat of honor on the boys' side of the room, and was captain in the spelling-matches—I suddenly and inexplicably entered upon a long and stubborn duel with my teachers—the teachers whose pride and joy I had been.

Whenever called to recite now, I would smile a small superior smile and say "I don't know"—being careful to pronounce the phrase with an inflection which would leave the teacher forever doubtful as to whether I had or had not known. It was at that time that I changed my copper-plate,

impeccably Spencerian handwriting for my present singular and ignoble chirography—one which astounds me anew each time I am placed face to face with it.

Another of my tricks was to look far, far away, with idiot dreaming eyes, while my patient teacher expounded with reiteration, with all the known pedagogic wiles, some intricate point in the mathematics of interest and insurance, of carpet-laying and wall-plastering.

But where the climax of scandal in my conduct was reached was in the matter of “compositions.”

I flatly refused to write “compositions.” The teacher could engross with the most loving care, with cat-like cajolings of curve and flourish and light-and-shade with chalk upon the board such subject for our meditations, such provocation to the assault of our pens, as “The Advantages and Disadvantages of Flats as Compared with Detached Houses.” I refused to bite, I refused to fall. I sat lack-lustre-eyed and inert in my seat, with pen idle in the slot. She could summon me to her desk, and with all her arts of persuasion seek to persuade; she could try tender expostulation or severe sarcasm—nothing doing. “I can’t write about that” was all that could be gotten out of me.

Usually, I finally landed in the Principal’s office. The Principal—he was a man—always said the same thing. He looked at me thoughtfully and said, kindly: “Well, if you can’t write about that subject, we’ll let you write about another.” He thought a long time, then smiled brightly, and said: “Why don’t you write the story of your life?”

But I refused to write the story of my life.

What was the matter with me those days? I am not sure. But I think it was simply the assertion of the young male. The young male discovering suddenly to his disgust that he was being taught and ruled and bossed by women. By arid old maids.

This lasted two years. How did I (for I did) get through the Grammar School? That is today a profound mystery to me. For two years I steadfastly refused to write a composition; yet at the end of the two years I was in High

School. It must be that beneath the arid exterior of those old-maid school teachers there beat hearts tenderly maternal and indulgent and wise. I say wise because, looking it over, I am very glad I did not stick forever in the grammar grades—or finish my education in the grammar grades. My hair rises at the thought: I would have missed all the good time I had later playing football.

A first-year student in High School (we were called Juniors in those days), I was still in revolt. And the first subject given us for composition in English I took as a personal insult. The subject was: An Original Story.

An Original Story! I thought. What rot! Why, kids couldn't write stories. Stories were written by *writers*. Famed writers—with beards. I looked about me with contempt at the bent backs of all my little schoolmates already innocently at work at this impossibly pretentious task. *They* didn't know, of course. But *I* did. By Jove, I wouldn't do it, that's all; I wouldn't!

Then it occurred to me that perhaps what I had been able to pull off in grammar school would not go in high school, that perhaps here wile would have more chance than open defiance. I sought some stratagem by which I could circumvent the teacher, by which, in some way, I could punish her—and found it. I knew! I would plagiarize! I would write something I had read—and she'd never know it! But *I* would know it, and thus be avenged!

There was a little story I had read which I remembered perfectly. It occurred in one of Jules Verne's books—in "The Children of Captain Grant." It had to do with a boy who, hunting birds' nests, had been caught in the chimney of an old castle—remaining in that awesome situation for twenty-four hours before being rescued.

I wrote that story with my tongue in my cheek. It stood there in perfect picture before my mind's eye; I could remember every word of it, every turn of phrase. With my tongue in my cheek, I toiled to render it exactly as I had read it, taking a malicious pleasure in the thoroughness of my dishonesty.

A week later, before the class, the teacher (and really, I see it now, she was a most charming young woman) reported on the compositions. "And," she said, at the end, "there is one story which is so good that it deserves to be published in the school paper. That story was written by James Hopper."

I blushed—and the blush was not merely, as she thought, the natural modesty of the sterling author. I went home troubled by my conscience. Remorse pricked me. By evening, seized with a perverse desire to make sure of the completeness of my transgression, I got out "The Children of Captain Grant," and looked up my story—Verne's story, I mean. I turned all the pages over carefully. And it wasn't there. It wasn't there at all. All there was was one line. Somebody said "Once I was caught in a chimney." And that was all. . . .

So, you see, my maiden effort was really a maiden plagiarism—which failed. Since it failed, then my second effort is the maiden one, and the first sentence of my paper is grammatical, and I am glad I did not change it. One should never correct anything. If one will only write enough after a mistake, the mistake always automatically rights itself.

I meant to tell you about this second maiden effort which—while the first was an attempt at plagiarism which proved original—was a plagiarism which wasn't—was an attempt at something startlingly original which later proved to be a plagiarism. But I have already passed out of the space severely allotted by the editor. I'm out of bounds—and vanish.

AVERY HOPWOOD

My first serious attempt at literary expression took the form of a novel. It was brought forth at the age of nine, and bore the name "Sweet Bessie, the Light-House Keeper's Daughter, or Love among the Kentish Hills." It only reached its second chapter—a cur-

tailment which I cannot but regret when I re-read one of its interesting passages:

“One morning a few days after they were married the young husband came into Bessie’s room, and what was his surprise to see, lying beside her, a new-born baby daughter.”

But the editor has suggested that the world at large and the literary beginner in particular might be more vitally interested in that first work of a writer which was not only given to the world, but purchased by the world! So here goes!

In my Junior year at the University of Michigan I was gravitating between the novel and the drama. Or rather, I had already decided, with youthful exuberance, that I would express myself frequently and brilliantly in both those fields—not to mention trifling excursions into the short story and the essay.

And then, upon a day of destiny, I came upon an article which Louis Defoe, the dramatic critic of the *New York World*, had written for our college magazine. Mr. Defoe, himself an alumnus of the university, pointed out to the undergraduates the golden rewards which might possibly await such of them as turned to playwriting. I was particularly interested in his account of how Clyde Fitch had, by a wave of his pen, so to speak, created for himself town houses and automobiles and country places with peacocks and swimming pools. I didn’t care so much for the peacocks, but my soul did yearn for the swimming pools—with a country house or two attached.

And so I took to playwriting. I hit upon a theme for a comedy—the influence of clothes upon feminine morals—but it was not until after my graduation that I found time to write this, my first play, “Clothes.” I evolved it in Cleveland, typed six copies of it and descended upon New York.

I left the six copies with six different managers.

Four weeks later I heard from one of these managerial firms—Wagenhals and Kemper, who accepted the piece and paid me advance royalty upon it. I later revised the play with the assistance of my very good friend Channing Pollock, and it was successfully produced, with Miss Grace George in the leading rôle.

It will be observed that I was fortunate enough to escape the long and weary waiting period, which seems to be the lot of most writers—particularly writers for the stage. This was partly luck, but it was, too, it seems to me, partly due to the fact that I had done a great deal of re-writing upon my play before I submitted it to a producer. Dion Boucicault's dictum, "Plays are not written, but re-written," has become trite in the repetition but it is still a good working motto for any dramatist—and especially for the novice.

If the embryo dramatist will really *write* one play—not just half-write it—if he will wring his subject dry, if he will expend all possible thought and energy upon it, before he sends it forth for judgment, he will arrive at a successful production much more quickly than if he dashes off a succession of manuscripts, no one of which is truly rounded or complete.

EMERSON HOUGH

It is an Eocene proposition, but I seem to remember sitting astride a fence one afternoon facing my younger brother, likewise festooned. It was heart to heart. I had no other confidant—I dared not tell my father, a stern old Virginian who intended to rear one son (myself) for the law, another (my confidant) for the medical profession, and a third (still younger) for the ministry. Not long before this time—I presume I then was ten, twelve, perhaps, fourteen years of age—I had found in the attic a sackful of love letters written by my father to my mother in courtship days. They were largely in verse, and I wish I had them now. They were signed "Theophilus" or "Tps," after the Victorian fashion.

I did not tell my father of my find, neither did I tell him as much as I did my brother of my unholy ambition to Write! Yet likely enough the old gentleman was to blame, after all, although it evoked a snort of wrath when, ten years later, I told him I wanted to be a Journalist. That meant to be the editor of a country weekly. It meant that the hard-found college money, spent on me for the law, had been wasted.

And yet that sackful of sheer romance, by "Tps"!

Well, what I told my little brother, who looked at me with awed, round blue eyes as we perched on the fence, was that I Had Written Something.

I was older than he. There was no editor around. I did not know what an editor was—then. So I expounded to him the art of literature as far as I had gone at that time, in the original manuscript hid in the bottom drawer of our spare room bureau. I told him that it was pretty easy to think up something, not so hard to think up people. "The hardest thing is to make them talk," I said to him, in my first confession of that ambition which later was to govern my life.

My brother made no reply. He was awed, scared at my superiority. He counseled me later not to tell. I never did. To this day I cannot say what became of my first effort. I hope my parents did not find it. They would have wept—as they did when, later, I forsook the law. Poor Tps! Poor Arabella! Dear, dear old people, who tried so hard for their children.

We had a "spare room"—also a "parlor," of course. On the white, ghastly, marble-topped parlor table we had a Family Bible, a Family Album, a conch shell, a basket of grass with alum crystallized on the stems; and a year's collection of *The Century Magazine*. These, especially the latter, gave our family an assured social standing quite aside from the fact that, although my father had red whiskers and chewed tobacco, he was and immemorially had been a deacon in the church.

Therefore, ergo, and of course, it was to *The Century Magazine* that I sent my first story to get so far along as the post office. . . . The reader will now suppose two years to have elapsed. . . .

Oh, very well. Of course, during the last year I wrote in many impassioned letters as all beginners do. I feared "a prejudice against Western writers"—not a bad bet at that time. But something in this innuendo cut the soul of that haughty editor. In less than another nine months he actually answered my letter—so that when I got back my first story it was not with a cold printed slip but a hot, exclamatory, passionate letter of protest at an assumption which—and so forth, et cetera. It was then I first learned that editors can do no wrong.

I presume I burned that manuscript. I don't remember. I know I went about for days like a hunted animal, afraid the truth about my maiden effort might be known. I forgot about the story, but believe it was Western.

I think the first thing I ever actually got into print—except in the college magazine, of which I was the editor, and so could print my own poetry when I pleased—was a Western travel story, published in a sportsman's journal. For it I got a railroad pass all the way from Chicago to New Mexico. Excellent journal! It got me there and it got me back, a year or so later. I wish I could get a pass for a story now!

Then I began a hectic struggle to extract money from Sam McClure and John Phillips, then running a newspaper syndicate. Lord! What stuff! Still, as they rarely paid for it, maybe it was all right, even so.

Then what might be called my real literary break, I presume, in *The Current Magazine* of Chicago, long defunct. I believe I got fifty dollars for my first serial. Those were the happy days!

You see, I find it difficult to determine just which I ought to call my really and truly maiden effort. I presume that it should be called that first attempt to break into the literary

Bible on our parlor table. If so, I got it there and I got it back.

But we were some swell family in our town, taking *The Century Magazine*, that way, and proving it to callers by the marble-topped table! I swear I've almost a notion to try *The Century* again, some day! The editor may suppose forty years to have elapsed. Or would he?

Alas, since the day when I solemnly explained the difficulty of dialogue to my young brother on the fence, many a fine editor has passed on. Customs, traditions, practices have changed in the writing world, and there is a market where once was none. Everything has changed.

. . . Did I say everything? Not at all! Methinks the love letters of Theophilus to Arabella have not changed, nor ever lost their fragrance. It was there I first felt, stealthily, ashamed, guiltily—the flavor of Romance.

And my father died before I ever got a successful book into covers. Perhaps "The Mississippi Bubble" was my maiden effort? It lost interest with me because then I was—well, along beyond adolescence; and by that time both my parents, who had worked to educate me for the law, were dead and could not know ever of the fence-top dreams of a boy who had been too ashamed to tell them of his maiden effort—and too proud to tell of all that lay between the earliest and a later day.

La, la, la! Well, I certainly shall try *The Century* again some day,—if I ever can save up the stamps.

RUPERT HUGHES

I never was a maiden and never made the effort to be one, but I assume that your interest is in the technically literary sense of the term. In that sense, every writing of mine is a maiden effort, for I have not reached the point of the octogenarian genius who groaned as he was about to die, "And I was just learning to write!"

The first published literature of mine was a struggle toward verse. It was issued in my eighth year. A former

school teacher recently sent to the Chicago *Tribune* a version of this epoch-marking lyric, and remembered it too well—remembered it far better than it was.

For the sake of historical accuracy, I ought therefore to give a correct text; but only a little of it recurs to me, and the world will have to wobble along on that.

It was entitled "Be Kind!" and was therefore of the didactic moral school, which I have since managed to escape and avoid with fair success.

It was the sort of thing that Martin Tupper might have written in his infancy if he ever really could have written so crassly even then.

Certain striking irregularities of rhythm foreshadowed the recent movement toward free verse, though rhyme was still invoked. I recall one distinctly:

Be kind to the little butterfly
That flutters harmlessly by.

The scansion of these two lines would fascinate a prosodist.

The poem included among other advices and exhortations an earnest request for tenderness toward the bee, though this smacked somewhat of supererogation.

The last couplet is indelible upon my shamed memory, violently as I have tried to forget it.

Be kind, be kind! To everything,
That walks on foot or soars on wing.

I was very proud of this then, for it seemed to me an absolute example of the difference between poetry and prose. As I explained to those who could be cornered long enough to listen; if I had written just "walks" or "soars" that would have been plain prose, but "walks on foot" and "soars on wing" were manifestly poetry.

Apparently I had a notion that what was unnecessary, repetitious, foolish and tautological turned prose into poetry. I have often since felt that my little mind had stumbled on a certain something that many old versifiers practice without realizing it.

I sent this poem to a boy friend. I had promised this boy that when I became president of the United States, I would appoint him vice-president. He is still waiting. His uncle published a paper at Glenwood, Missouri. He printed the poem and my then home-town paper, the *Gate City* of Keokuk, Iowa, reproduced it under the heading, "A Precocious Boy."

That was a bad day for me in school, for the other boys treated me as if I had the mumps or something ludicrous. None of us knew just what "precocious" meant, but we had a well-founded suspicion that it was something to be ashamed of. The only thing that redeems my respect for myself as a child is that when I read those early things over now, I realize that I was not precocious at all. I was simply presumptuous and conceited. At that time I knew things, had religion, saved souls, and gave earnest lectures to my parents on how to bring up their children, particularly the other children.

Shortly after that, I fell from my high estate and have never since known anything, believed much; or hoped to save anybody.

My next literary endeavor was in the field of the drama. It was relentlessly moral also.

The title "Little by Little" indicated the terrible results of letting oneself fall gradually into error. The hero, or rather the protagonist, was one George Thompson. In a prologue he was shown as a boy stealing from another boy a pin carelessly laid down. The first act took place many years later, when George was as mature as I could play him with a burnt cork mustache. He was now a full-fledged thief and in the course of his nefarious activities, he wounded one man and killed another right in front of the audience (*coram populo*) in the family living room, and killed them at that with a clicking old revolver that had not even a blank cartridge to give it voice. George was pursued by a posse and perished in his sins, a fate which will not befall any member of the Author's League who profits by the lesson of this great play, and abstains his hand from stealing

his first pin. I myself am fairly safe with pins, but I could never be trusted with a rubber band. I would do almost anything to get a rubber band except buy one.

My next . . . but one cannot go on repeating maiden efforts indefinitely.

EDWARD HUNGERFORD

The *Boy's Friend* was our first venture into the realms of literature. We then were ten. In size eight pages of foolscap, we wrote and illustrated it in lead pencil and then, with the aid of carbon paper, multigraphed it. So it was that we met the slender demands of beginning circulation—all of it in our block, save three copies each week to the south or benighted side of Clinton street. Gradually, we broadened—gradually we became aware of the existence of still another sex—*The Boy's Friend* became merely *The Friend*. Also, we received from a doting parent a small printing press—it was called “The Excelsior”—and seven fonts of second-hand type. Circulation increased. Our field of influence now swept from the Third Ward into the Second and even into some nearby corners of the Fourth.

Gone for a time were the poignant joys of authorship alone. Now was expression widened. While sticking type was a new pleasure and, for a little while at least, extremely worth while. An ancient printer—like most of the elder members of his craft, he claimed to have worked on the New York *Tribune* and to have had a personal acquaintance with Horace Greeley—taught us our p's and q's. We reeked of benzine and wallowed in ink. And today we cannot pass an old-fashioned printshop without a vast yearning to go in and stand at the cases and put the clicking types into the stick once again. It still seems to be the most fascinating profession in the world. And, to our own way of thinking, one of the most valuable that any young man may acquire.

The Watertonian was our third venture. It was an ambitious affair; and limned with ideals as well. Upon its

masthead it bore the following verse, not original, but taken from an English newspaper published in Panama in the latter part of the last century:

For the cause that lacks assistance,
For the wrong that needs resistance,
For the future in the distance
And the good that I can do.

Here was an ambitious affair for a small boy; far too large for the modest-sized printing-press that we owned and so printed in the establishment of a kind-hearted relative. It had a short life, but a vigorous one. Its realm of influence was limited neither to Watertown nor Jefferson County nor the whole State of New York. We had exchanges, if you please, in England, in India and in far-off Australia.

Those were the days—a full quarter of a century ago—when amateur journalism flourished—all over the English-speaking world; while to write and print a magazine that would excite commendation in London or Calcutta or in Brisbane was an achievement worthy of all the effort.

But the day came when *The Watertonian*, like many and many another publication, printed its valedictory. "Circumstances over which we have no control," wrote the editor in double-leaded eight-point type, "compel us to suspend the publication of our magazine." He spake the truth. He was going away—to boarding-school.

No more would Homer Rice's Arctic Soda Fountain at the upper end of the Public Square beckon to him as it has been beckoning to the Watertown boys for more than half a century now. Jefferson Hose Company Number Three and John Hancock Hook and Ladder Number One would have to roll their ways to all the fires sounded by the siren whistle on Knowlton Brothers' paper mill without his aid; no longer would he stand at the junction, watching Jeff Wells' Number Forty-four—which, as all the North country knows, hauled the Cape Vincent Local for more than forty-five years before finally going to the scrap-heap—

and wondering if God, in His infinite goodness, would ever send him a passenger run. All these things were to cease. A stern New England seminary was going to take a wrestle at a scholastic bramble bush in the making.

Of the pruning of that bramble bush we shall say but little now. The founder of *The Boy's Friend* became the least distinguished alumnus of a much distinguished college in Central New York. He tinkered for a time—not successfully—with architecture.

But what was college, what were the five classic orders of the ancient builders, compared with working on a real newspaper, in a real city like Rochester, with Rob Beach, the kindest city editor that ever sat at a copy desk—and the most patient—to help work out the hard journalistic knots at the very beginning of serious things? And what in turn was even the thorough training of the Rochester *Herald* to be compared with that of the New York *Sun*, with the kindness and sympathy of Kellogg and Mallon and Tommy Dieuade and Boss Clark, only second to that of Rob Beach himself?

These were still the formative years. From them sprang all the desire of mind creation.

Stories, articles, even verse—how they flowed from the typewriter those days, and how uniformly and consistently they flowed back again like the very movement of the tides. . . . Until one fine day the editor of a highbrow magazine, wearied perhaps with the flood, reached down and caught one of the manuscripts and printed it. Printed another. And another. And many others. Other editors followed.

The trick was turned. Not again could there be a maiden effort. The founder of *The Boy's Friend* was a full-fledged author now—whatever that may mean. He was aboard the wheel of full endeavor. The wheel would grind on, whether with him or without him. And whether or not he went on with it would depend entirely upon his own abilities—and his own energies.

FANNIE HURST

At the age of ten I burst into verse:
 Oh woman is a funny thing,
 She never will have wings.
 Like man her sole ambition is,
 to simply, simply rise.

At fifteen, *The Saturday Evening Post* had the honor to reject an exceedingly blank-verse "Masque to Thessaly."

At sixteen I attempted to finish (and improve upon) Coleridge's "Christabel."

At seventeen, I completed the cycle eleven times by sending to eleven publications a short story entitled, "Upon the Irony of Fate."

It was finally published. Not by one of the eleven but by my college paper—after I had become one of the editors.

I suppose then I should call this my maiden effort.

I offer excerpts of it to the Great Chams of the Pen as supreme examples of Anfractuosity, Banality, Compact Incomprehensibility, Desciency, Effusiveness, Flaccidity, Garrulity, Hyperbolism, Imbecility, Juvenescence, and so on to Omega!

Mine is a tale of the night; that weird, mystic period only to be comprehended in the category of illusion. When God's great and panting universe sinks languidly into its purple shroud and the world relaxes When the play-tired child droops his bright head and wanders off to dreams, the solitary watcher in the tower presses his haggard face closer to the pane and keeps his lonely vigil out across the sea, when the fair young girl, home from her first ball, laughs softly over the joys of it all and buries her flushed face in her flowers, and the wide-eyed prisoner, battling with the torments of his cell turns his face to the wall and clutches the steely bars. The midnight tolls, the child dreams on, the

white face is still against the pane, the girl is laughing yet, but this time in her dreams, the prison laughs too—**THE LAUGH OF THE MANIAC** . . . for again, mine is a tale of the night!

From the river banks a frog talked lustily to himself, and above the girl's head, Kahgahgee, the King of Ravens, laughed Hideously, for it was Midnight—the Death Hour, and he anticipated the morrow. . . .

Suddenly a love song broke the stillness, it was the homeward bound North Wind, singing the Mama Gucha, dreaming of his Morning Star. And the Night Sun, the round and silly moon, seeing his reflection on the polished surface of the water, looked down at it and—leered. . . .

She paused for a moment and then looking up at the waiting star she whispered, "I wish—oh I wish that I were the Indian maiden, Morning Star, that I might sit before my father's wigwam weaving baskets in the sun, that I were dark and wild, for she is happy—free—and this—this life is empty—empty—empty!" And again the moon leered.

This gallimaufry was followed by a somewhat violent reaction. Old Boccaccio had nothing on me. Under my auspices the ladies of Shakespeare house-partied at the home of Juliet, the contralto Lady Macbeth and stately Portia choosing for some reason known only to myself to week-end with the fourteen year old Miss Capulet. This ambitious, amazingly unsophisticated and unexpurgated Decameron was offered around as a series, and around and around and around.

My first play, also written at seventeen was called "The Shadow"—and other things.

I would rebound to verse. A dyspeptic couplet culled from an old scrap-book asks of Deity:

"Oh God, what is this pain around my heart,
Is it that Love has cast his dart?"

Again:

“If I should die tonight, dear love,
My kiss will coin a new star above.”

In college under the subtle pseudonym, Fan Niehurst, I sent four successive bits of fiction to a local paper of rather national repute, *Reedy's Mirror*. A love idyl of a Roman maiden and a gladiator large of bicep. An Elizabethan romance smacking of the Paul and Virginia school. “The Confessions of a Nubian Girl,” and last, the ham-and-eggs courtship of a department store clerk named Eddie Snuggs.

I sold the last for five dollars. I had broken into fiction.

With that five dollars I purchased a morocco-bound note book largely and guiltily inscribed, “Fannie Hurst—Author.”

It was the dire beginning of who knows what dire end!

WALLACE IRWIN

In my case it was a tragedietta in two small acts. The scene is laid in a very dirty room in Encina Hall, a dormitory for males at Leland Stanford University. The characters are two: Myself and Roommate. Two pale students are bending over a table in a desperate effort to “cram” a semester of Horace into one evening of intensive study, as is customary on the evening before an examination.

ACT I

Roommate: (glancing up) Say, Mick, that sonnet of yours “At the Stevenson Fountain” is a bully job. How did you come to think of it?

Myself: (dreamily) I was in San Francisco during Easter vacation. I was broke, as usual. I saw Bruce Porter's wonderful monument to Robert Louis in Portsmouth Square and the idea came to me—the comfort Stevenson's Christmas Sermon must bring to men without home, without money—

Roommate: Think of the boost Ambrose Bierce gave that sonnet! Pretty soft for a man in his sophomore year—

look here, Mick! (I look there.) You're a self-supporting student and there's no reason in the world why you should have to go round mowing faculty lawns for a living.

Myself: None whatever.

Roommate: Why, old man, all you have to do is to sit down and dash off poems like that, send 'em to magazines and cash the checks.

Myself: Would I sell my soul?

Roommate: Editors don't want soul. They want copy. Why, man alive, there's thousands to be made in literature, if you keep busy. There was a man right here in Stanford who sold a short story to *The Black Cat*. That was back in '95. He got fifty dollars, I think—maybe it was five hundred.

Myself: I've heard that myth. But then, short stories—

Roommate: They're only prose. Poetry's a lot more difficult, and this sonnet of yours has aroused a great deal of interest already. The standard rate for sonnets, I think, is twenty-five dollars.

Myself: (morbidly) Twenty-five dollars! (I reach down into my drawer and bring out a scrap of paper upon which a very good sonnet has been very badly typewritten in purple ink. I sigh.) Where shall I send it?

Roommate: It's on a San Francisco subject. The Eastern magazines wouldn't understand it, probably.

Myself: There's *The Overland Monthly*. It was founded by Bret Harte—

Roommate: That's the idea! Once get a start on that publication and they'll make you a regular contributor. That'll put you on easy street for your junior and senior years.

Myself: (sighing again) Lend me an envelope. (He lends me an envelope.) Got the makin's? (He passes me cigarette papers and a limp tobacco sack.)

Roommate: Better drop the editor a line saying that you can dash off stuff like this any old time.

Myself: Dry up! (I sign the sonnet carefully "Wallace A. Irwin," write my address upon an upper corner with

the words "respectfully submitted" and fold it into the borrowed envelope.)

Roommate: You just listen to your uncle.

Myself: (entranced) Twenty-five dollars!

(Slow Fade-out.)

ACT II

Same scene as before. Six weeks have elapsed. It is mid-afternoon and my Roommate and I sit by an open window gazing moodily down the walk where many students are strolling towards football practice.

Myself: Got the makin's?

Roommate: Sure. (He brings out the limp sack and papers.)

Myself: Is it seven dollars or nine that I owe you?

Roommate: (magnanimously) How do I know? It's nine, I think.

Myself: It's all right about that tennis racket you borrowed and my plaid cap.

Roommate: Why don't you go to work?

Myself: You know darned well I've sprained my ankle.

Roommate: If you'd stop robbing hen-roosts—

Myself: Dry up! I've been cutting classes for a week because I'm shy on text books. They soak you two and a half now for "Private Life of the Romans" and those mid-Saxon glossaries—

Roommate: Borrow 'em.

Myself: I'm a marked man. Not only that, I'm nine days behind with my room-rent. Last night Adder-Claws threatened to turn me out into the night if I don't pungle by Thursday. Say, why in the world did you ever suggest my earning a living by literature?

Roommate: Cheer up! Yesterday Bill Neidig sold a story to *The Black Cat*. Saw the check—

Myself: (hungrily) How much?

Roommate: Seventy-five dollars.

Myself: Can it be possible?

Roommate: I'm a practical man, Mick. All you poets need a business manager. My father's in the potato business. Just follow me and I'll see you through this game.

Myself: It was six weeks ago I sent away my sonnet. Gosh! I forgot to put a stamp on it—

Roommate: I knew you would bungle it some way. But you can't expect a dignified magazine like *The Overland Monthly* to give you an answer right away. Especially on poetry. That requires special consideration—(three fateful knocks are heard upon the door).

Myself: (faintly) Come in! (Enter a Japanese, bearing letters.)

Japanese: For you, please! (I spring upon the letter, but my Roommate, in his eagerness, has snatched it from my trembling hands.)

Roommate: My God! It's from *The Overland Monthly!*

Myself: (in a hoarse whisper) Can it be possible?

Roommate: (after tearing open the envelope, reads) "My dear Mr. Irwin: We are greatly pleased to accept for publication your charmingly perfect sonnet 'At the Stevenson Fountain'"—

Myself: Wait a minute! (I gulp a glass of water and gaze at my Roommate with a wild surmise.) What else does he say?

Roommate: (reading) "You have the gift of poesy which is in itself like the possession of pure gold—"

Myself: Does he mention the price?

Roommate: I'm coming to that. (Reads) "And, although we feel that the discussion of financial reward may be distasteful to the artist of true feeling—" (Dramatic pause.)

Myself: (choking) Go on!

Roommate: (reading). "We know that all literary achievement deserves compensation. Therefore, we take pleasure in putting you down for a year's subscription to *The Overland Monthly.*"

Myself: (in a clear, ringing tone) Anything more?

Roommate: (reading) "Yours very faithfully—The Editors."

Myself: (rising stiffly) My ankle feels a little better; I think I'll go out and mow that lawn.

(Curtain.)

BURGES JOHNSON

There are several worthy persons now living who may recall their joint editorship of sundry periodicals that appeared intermittently in New London, Connecticut, years ago. Neither the Congressional Library nor the British Museum preserves any copy, either of *The Earth* or of *The Eclipse*. As I remember, they were not only hand-written but hand-illustrated and illuminated. Editors and authors were identical, thereby doing away with all grounds for disagreement which, in these benighted times, occur occasionally in the literary shop. Our joint labors were conducted in such perfect harmony in those days that even if I could recall the contents of those folio editions, I could never claim any maiden effort therein as all my own.

I think that my first published article was a letter written to a magazine for young folks. In order to insure acceptance I filled it with blatant flattery. It did not come back, so I watched for each issue of that periodical with an excitement closely akin to my feelings on Christmas eve when my eye was on the chimney opening.

At last the letter appeared in print. I devoured it. But it happened that I had confided to the editor the fact that a club of young people subscribed jointly for his paper. He printed my letter, but with a foul intent. He added to it an editorial comment, scolding me roundly. "Every young person in my club," he said, "should subscribe separately. Imagine," he said, "how it would be if clubs of children were formed in order to receive one Christmas present to be shared among them all!" The words of that scolding are still graven upon my brain.

Thus it was with a real distrust of editors that I approached a second experience.

While I was a college student I sent some verses to *Life*. They were returned with a pleasantly worded printed slip from the editor. I sent some more. They were returned with similar comment, the wording if I remember rightly being identically the same. I did it again and yet again, always with the same result.

Then at last came acceptance with a handwritten note asking for more. But there was an old flaw in my respect for editors. I proceeded to hunt up all those rejected manuscripts and I sent them in response to the request. They were all accepted.

It was then that a great truth dawned upon me. Editors were humanly fallible. Any one could be one. So, in time, I myself became an editor.

ELIZABETH JORDAN

The first literary drippings came from my gifted pen when I was thirteen years old; and I need hardly add that they took the form of a love story. I gave the effusion the title "Caleb Green's Affinity," and optimistically sent it to *The Evening Wisconsin*, the leading newspaper in Milwaukee, which was my home city.

The tale, when finished, had amazed me by its beauty and charm of style.

Nevertheless, some instinct kept me from confiding to any one the fact that I had written it. I had heard that stories sent to newspapers and magazines were sometimes returned. It was unthinkable that this one would be returned—but I played safe.

I was pleased but not greatly surprised when I received a letter from Mrs. William E. Cramer, then editor of *The Wisconsin's* fiction department, accepting the story; but I was enchanted by the fact that she addressed me as "Dear Madam," which proved that she thought I was grown up. The maturity of my style and the excellence of my romance

had obviously deceived her. That was so gratifying that I received almost with composure a whole dollar she subsequently sent me in payment for the story.

The temptation to tell my family of this triumph was great. I also desired to tell my teachers and my classmates and the boy who delivered newspapers at the house and strangers on the street. I desired to stop those strangers and tell them that sometime they would have an opportunity to read a story I had written. I thought they ought to know this. But, even stronger than those desires was the fascination of a Plan I had evolved. The Plan was this:

I would tell no one about the story until it was published. Then, quite casually, I would read it aloud to the members of my family and listen to their exclamations of interest while they heard it and watch them fall dead, so to speak, when at the end the author's name was revealed.

To carry out this Plan, I had to waylay the newsboy every afternoon until the story appeared, lest the newspaper fall into other hands and the great secret leak out. I waylaid him until he was convinced that I was the victim of a hopeless attachment for him. He bragged of it and had to be thrashed by the little boy to whom I *was* attached.

The story finally appeared in print, about a month after its acceptance. I hid *The Evening Wisconsin* until the members of the family had assembled in the living room after dinner. It was an impressive circle, made up of my father, mother, maternal grandmother, small sister, and two frivolous young aunts who were visiting us.

When I announced that I was about to read a story aloud they were all greatly depressed, and showed it. They became more depressed as the reading went on. They thought the story was slush, and said so. They frequently interrupted to ask anxiously why I insisted on finishing it. I did insist. I read it to the bitter end. Then I invited criticism—and got it!

My mother expressed surprise that newspapers wasted their space on anything so trivial. My father admitted that he had ceased to listen after the first half dozen paragraphs. My gay young aunts improvised an "act" burlesquing the principal scene.

My small sister said, suddenly and abruptly: "I like it!" But as she had slept peacefully throughout the reading, the tribute was not as warming as it might have been.

At last, my grandmother asked, with gentle surprise, "What is there about it that interests you, dear?"

"I wrote it," I confessed, and lifted up my voice and wept.

It is gratifying to pause here and recall the scene that followed this simple announcement—the amazement, the incredulity, the subsequent humility, the excitement. Every one wanted to hold the newspaper and read again and again the title and the name of the author, set forth in print for the first time. Remorseful efforts were made to recall or palliate the previous harsh criticisms.

But my heart was broken and I didn't care who knew it. Also, my bubble had burst and my career was ruined. I did not grow calm until my father silenced the others and tenderly explained that while the story would be very slight as the production of an established author it was highly promising as the first effort of a little girl of thirteen. He was convinced, he solemnly assured me, that few little girls of thirteen could write better stories. I wiped my eyes.

The memory of the anguish I had experienced lingered for a quarter of a century. Then I worked it into a bit of fiction called "Olive's First Story," which was published in *Harpers' Magazine* and kindly praised by William Dean Howells.

This seemed a satisfactory climax to the episode, and I let it go at that!

KATE JORDAN

The burning desire to express myself in words began early in me—at seven years, to be exact. At that age I started the story of a family of settlers in New England who suffered agonies from dread of prowling and attacking Redskins. This was written in a small copy-book with a leaky pen, divided into chapters of about two hundred words each, and called “The Cabin All Alone.” When it was less than half done I had perforce to lay it aside as, ink-spotted and breathless from my brain energies, I was taken to the country for the summer.

In the Autumn I felt very important as I settled myself at the liliptian desk that had been given me as a Christmas present and prepared to go on with the great Work. (This desk, by the way, had been thought necessary by the family in order to confine my mania for writing on walls, piano keys, fly leaves of books, etc., to a place where it would do the least harm.)

I was a dismayed author when, reading back to see just how I would conclude “The Cabin All Alone,” I found that, in the diminutive chapters already done, every character—Harold, Lillian, father, mother, the old grandfather, and even the faithful mastiff, Wiggle (unfittingly named after my own bulldog) were already dead—all slaughtered in various and dreadful ways by the prowling Redskins. Disgusted at my mistake in construction, I left the tale so—ended at its beginning.

The effort which was a maiden one in lassoing payment and publication had been fashioned after the weaving of many unsuccessful tales, and at the age of twelve. This is how it happened!

I lived, next-to-the-youngest of a large family, in a red brick house in one of the old streets of Greenwich Village. For more than a year a young professor who was an admirer of a grown-up sister had been secretly helping me in my author’s strivings—which embraced a cold attic and stolen candles and unremitting labor at dead of night while

those of the family not burning with temperament were deep in that dull, "sleek-headed" sleep satirically commended by Caesar. This young professor would take away, have copied and post for me all the manuscripts I secretly slipped to him, and all as passionately blotted as they were laboriously written.

At least ten manuscripts were out when *The Day* arrived.

It was a wet Saturday morning. No school. I was tucked away in a sheltered corner of an upper hall supposed to be studying my lessons when I was really at work on another possibly immortal creation.

Suddenly there was a loud ringing of the basement bell; then the piercing summons of a postman's whistle; then more ringing, while the dog, Wiggle, barked as I had never heard even him bark before. This din brought me, petulantly annoyed, from the creator's dream-world. But not until I heard my name called through the house by several people at once and in an excited way did I feel hopeful of its meaning and stagger from my corner.

I recall that I stood with hand pressed to heart—the manner called for by the situation—as with head stuck forward and short locks half-veiling my face, I slid in the snake-like twist of disorganizing nervousness down the banisters and into the front basement room where the most important drama of my life up to that time was set.

A dripping, smiling postman, holding up a letter that had a red delivery card strapped to it—a registered letter, often seen before, but never one for me. My mother puzzled; my older sister, ditto; my younger sister dancing on her toes; the red and round-faced cook peeping in, delighted in her Hibernian way that *something* upsetting, however small, was happening as a tonic for her day; my dog, Wiggle, barking at each in turn, with his most frenzied objections boomed at the postman. There was the following dialogue:

Postman: I have a registered letter here for Miss Floribel Darcy in care of Miss Kitty Jordan. Are you Miss Jordan.

I: Ye-es. (A breath.)

Postman: Can you sign for Miss Darcy?

I: Ye-es.

Mother: How can you? Who is she?

I: Me—I mean—I. That's my—my *nom de plume*.

Mother: (resigned) (Oh, indeed? I thought I saw your *nom de plume* on something recently as Pearl de Vere.

I: This—*this* is—a new one.

Mother: What next!

And the final—the glorious moment! After I had signed the wet card with the man's indelible pencil and he had smilingly departed, I opened the much-stamped envelope before a rapt audience and found there three crisply new one dollar bills with the following receipt, which I read aloud in an agitated voice:

“Received from *The ——— Weekly*, for story ‘At Ocean's Mercy’ by Floribel Darcy, three dollars. Received payment. Please sign on line.”

Cook: Oh, she's grand! Miss Kitty's grand! Three dollars from a paper—*an' look at her!*

Mother: “At Ocean's Mercy.” Gracious! What could you say on such a subject?

I: (bolder now and glowing) Oh, there's a shipwreck—and the heroine almost dies of thirst—and the hero swims with her to a desert island—

Mother: This just shows how this fiction stuff is written. You can't possibly remember crossing the ocean from Dublin, as you weren't there, and your sea experiences since have been one boat ride to Long Branch and one to Coney Island!

I: (broodingly) What does *that* matter? I—*imagined* it!

I retreated to solitude, to kiss each one of the dollar bills many times. I remember they went to help the purchase of a little squirrel turban for which my soul had longed. That payment and publication acted on me as does the first taste of blood on a tiger. After that, I felt that nothing could stop me! And, though I had a long and heart-wearing apprenticeship—nothing did.

REGINALD WRIGHT KAUFFMAN

During several years my maiden efforts adorned the walls of an encouraging aunt's and uncle's sitting-room, for until the age of five or six I was an artist in pastels, making illustrations for the books that they read aloud. As I recall these works of the illustrator's art—and particularly one, suggested by a scene in the Chronicle of the Cid and entitled "Rodrigo Steps Forth"—I was considerably under pre-Raphaelite influences and, because I would demonstrate in my own person that the depicted actions were not impossible, I used to be accused of posing for my drawings after they were made.

From this the step was natural to devising stories for myself and illustrating them as I went along. I say "devising" them, for I drew the letter-press: I hadn't then mastered script.

"Pretextat, a Tragedy in One Act" was completed at the age of eleven. My favorite passage is that from the soliloquy of the Bishop of Rouen, in the tense third scene:

'Tis useless now to pray in formal Prayer,
 "God grant me courage" is all my lips can say.
 I read and yet I know not what I read.
 "Courage, courage," rushes through my brain:
 "Courage, courage," hisses in my ear.
 My cup is full, full to overflowing—
 What more can bishops of my place expect?
 Tossed on the sea of Politics, away, poor man,
 Away from home, then rescued by a passing ship,
 Call'd Death, which haileth from Eternity,
 Brought home, brought home again
 Only to die by those cruel waves, beaten
 Against those granite rocks—men's stony nature—

At fourteen I wrote, among other poems, one called "Evening on the Susquehanna." I took it with me to St. Paul's School, at Concord, New Hampshire. During the Autumn of my first year there the school paper (I was proud to

become its editor afterwards, for Marion Crawford and Owen Wister and Arthur Train had served it as editors) held a prize-poem contest, and this poem won the prize. That, I think, was my first published work, and here it is:

Evening comes, and, slow descending,
 Like a beacon in the sky,
 Sinks the golden sun in splendor,
 Kissing lilac clouds good-bye.
 Gilding pine and fen and farmland
 Painting country roof and spire,
 Leaving all the East in darkness,
 Setting all the West on fire.

All the fields are growing lonely;
 Corn-stacks seem to fear the night;
 Overhead into the sun-land
 Solemn field crows wing their flight;
 All the river dark is growing,
 Save one track of ling'ring gold;
 On the farm the candles twinkle,
 Yonder homeward strays the fold.

Now to the hills the sun's a crown;
 It sinks—and then the night comes down.

After that I leaned more and more towards prose.

BASIL KING

The spirit of my maiden effort can only be understood by those few American readers who know what is meant by the Oxford Movement. It lives now—I am speaking of the Oxford Movement, not of my maiden effort—chiefly in Victorian biography, that ocean of delightful reading; and, here in the United States, in the churches known as “High Episcopalian,” of which each big city has one or two. Historically, it is considered due to that wave of Romanticism which swept over Europe in the early

Nineteenth Century, giving us Keats, Shelley, Scott and Coleridge, together with the great Romantic school of painting and writing which became a force in France somewhere about 1830. Its inspiration lay in the desire to infuse into the dry—I am speaking not in the sherry or champagne sense, but in that of dust—to infuse into the dry Romanticism of the day, and of most days, something of warmth, color, history, and the picturesque.

That which has never been more than an exotic on American soil was, however, in my boyhood, an indigenous plant anywhere within the borders of the British Empire.

We grew up amid its bloom and aroma. Into our somewhat meagre Canadian life it brought the fragrance of "far-off remembered things," and linked up our scattered Colonies—much more isolated from each other than they are today—with a tremendous tradition that made the world poetic. Our school life was steeped in it. Our stories were as often of the exploits of martyrs in the early Church as they were of the not more exciting happenings to fur-traders in the Hudson Bay Company, or pirates among the coral islands.

It was natural, therefore, that my maiden effort should reflect these interests and deal with what I may call the scenic ecclesiastical.

I was some ten years of age, and much under the influence of a school-mastering English divine, intense and ascetic in the style of Cardinal Manning, with literary yearnings of his own—one of Wordsworth's "poets sown by nature, yet wanting the accomplishment of verse." He taught us geography by means of our own fiction. That is, we travelled in imagination all over the map, on yachts, warships, camels, or elephants, according to choice, and wrote accounts of our adventures. We dove for pearls, we hunted polar bear, we sat round the cauldrons of cannibals.

For me the cauldrons of cannibals had an unspeakable fascination, and yet I could never remove it very far from the scenic ecclesiasticism mentioned above. However daringly I roamed through the forests of the Amazon or the mountains of Tibet, the tapestry of feasts and fasts and

mystic stained-glass presences hung round all my tales. Of these none merited the name of tale—they were in truth no more than the unvarnished reports of perils—till one day I received, right out of heaven, what all authors know as a "Subject."

It was a good subject, and my very first. Of its tenor I recall no more than that the ingredients were love and hate, cannibals and saints' days. There was a mystery in it, too, a mystery which turned on some such miscalculation as to time as saves the situation in "Round the World in Eighty Days." Working up to that with a truly dramatic intensity I came to the crowning moment when the hero—myself—routed his enemies and saved his person from the cauldron by exclaiming, "Ah, but this year Ash-Wednesday comes on a Monday!"

There was in this triumphant cry, sprung when all seemed lost, the elements of surprise, confusion, and victory. I scanned the face of the English divine, watching for the effect when he came to the ingenious climax. I remember only that his mouth twitched as he silently passed the manuscript back to me, tapping on the words with his pencil.

Even then I failed to grasp the significance of this soundless observation. I grasped it only after long thought, and in solitude—grasped it with that rising of the blood to the whole surface of the skin, hot, shamed, terrible, which we know as blushing all over.

But there it was!—and there it is!—that escape from me of the Absolute Truth which I have sought all my life and never captured.

Now, after twenty years of writing, Absolute Truth seems to me like a figure I have seen on an Etruscan vase in the Vatican. It is called "Fame Eluding Her Follower." It represents a female figure making a prodigious spring which puts the right foot incredibly far in front and leaves the left incredibly far behind, while towards the poor man panting in her rear she turns her profile, with her thumb to her nose and her fingers stretched in a well-known classic gesture.

RICHARD LE GALLIENNE

How I began! The question rather startles one—makes one look up fearfully at the clock. Is it time already to be asked that question? Surely, it was only yesterday—it cannot be all these years—since we “began”!

O Time! Surely it was only yesterday that I was a boy in Liverpool, with a book under my arm dreaming that the only thing worth doing in the world was the writing of a book; the only success worth achieving—its being published. How that dream came to be in my blood I scarcely know. My mother loved poetry, my father loved theology. She had a romantic nature, he had a scholarly bent. Many books were in our household, but the majority were not to my youthful taste. At first sight, the great bookcase seemed a veritable fortress of theological commentary; but there was a secular corner high up at the top where a small collection of more human volumes crowded together as if for mutual protection and to keep each other warm; some volumes of Carlyle, The Waverley Novels, and a set of Dickens. There was little poetry; but there was Burns, Byron, Wordsworth, Longfellow, George Herbert and William Cowper. No Keats, no Shelley, no Coleridge! Never mind; the adventure of finding out those poets for one’s self was to be all the more thrilling.

Tennyson was to be introduced to me by a schoolmaster of rarely gentle nature and sensitive love of letters, and it was he who bought me my first copy of Tennyson. It was a prize for my excellence in—“Divinity”! That day, I remember, I saw the name of Swinburne for the first time on a newly published volume, but Swinburne was to mean nothing to me until long after.

Indeed, in those days, I cared little for poetry. My passion—possibly caught from Scott—was a passion for antiquities—old castles and abbeys and Druidical remains. The distinguished bookshop of Messrs. Young and Sons was, as, doubtless, it still is, a veritable treasure house of such

antiquarian lore, and there, thanks to the hospitality of those scholarly bookmen—when I had exchanged my school desk for the desk of an accountant's articulated clerk—I was able to spend rapt luncheon hours among the old folios and quartos, and very much more than my slender pocket-money. But there it was, too, that my eyes first fell on the first line of Keats' "Endymion." How well I remember that strange moment of "poetry's divine first finger touch"!

Soon after this, to the dismay of my elders, I began to write verses to sundry fair faces—surreptitiously, between the pages of my ledger; yet I must say for myself, and I think my old employers would bear me out, that I was not an absolute dunce as an accountant, either. However well or ill I have been able to write books, I could match any of my fellows at balancing them; and I still treasure some volumes that came to me as prizes in certain stern accountancy examinations.

Liverpool, while not exactly clement to the Muses, was not quite without literary traditions and associations, of which I made the most. The shade of Roscoe the historian haunted one of its libraries; the great Matthew Arnold came sometimes to stay with friends in the suburbs; at Walmsley's Book Shop in Lord Street, Mr. William Watson's "Epigrams" had been published a few years before; and occasionally, like wings of prophecy, the locks and cloak of Mr. Hall Caine passed over the city. Men who occasionally wrote for magazines and reviews did actually walk its streets, bright beings of whom I sometimes caught awful glimpses. One of these, Mr. Walter Lewin, actually wrote signed articles for "The Academy." By wonderful chance, he became my friend, and took an interest in those verses to the fair faces. Mr. James Ashcroft Nobb—whose gifts both as a poet and a critic have never been sufficiently appreciated—dropping in sometimes from Southport, did the same.

These friends introduced me to another, the excellent artistic printer, Mr. John Robb, by whose aid at length

those verses turned into a fairy-like little book on hand-made paper, with rough edges, rubricated initials, and antique boards, which, like a shy flower blossoming out of a ledger, presently made its "privately printed" appearance.

Meanwhile, I had been writing bookish and antiquarian articles for Mr. Elliot Stock's *Book-Lore* and affiliated magazines. By the strange kindness of subscribers to these periodicals and sundry private friends, the whole edition disappeared—but I only recall that far-off excitement today because a copy of the little book found its way into the hands of Mr. John Lane, who, with Mr. Elkin Matthews, was just then dreaming of "The Bodley Head." Mr. Lane, as we all know, has ever been an inspired collector, and some lines of mine on first editions had caught his fancy. Thanks to them, we became friends—and what I, in common with other young writers of that time, owe to Mr. Lane's rare love and instinct for letters might well make a separate history.

By this time I had said good-bye to my office. It was a parting due to what one might call mutual incompatibility; yet of that old office I cherish innumerable warm memories. It was to me a rare university of humanity. But I am afraid I was more appreciated by my associates than by my employers, and I still treasure among my private archives a letter written to my father by the senior member of the firm, in which he said that they feared they could make little of me, for "my head was so filled with literature, and I was so idle that I was demoralizing the whole office."

So I rented a great old loft in an ancient office building near the docks, turned it into a study—with the co-operation of an ever-helpful mother—and seriously, as they used to say, "commenced author."

Love of De Quincey and Lamb and Thoreau, and later Walter Pater and Stevenson, had caused me just then to put aside purely poetic ambitions, and in that old loft I dreamed the dream—shared with others of my generation—of writing prose that should indicate and include the quali-

ties of poetry, that imaginative prose of which we have heard no little since then.

To that old loft came my first commission—from Mr. Lane—to write a book on George Meredith. I would hardly venture upon the task now, but one is afraid of nothing at twenty-one. So I wrote the book for Mr. Lane, and, as a result of it, went up to London. It chanced that just at that moment one of our “T.P.’s” earliest successes, the *Star*, was about to lose one of its most valued contributors, Mr. Clement Shorter. His column on “Books and Bookmen” was vacant and up to competition. I took my fling at it, fearfully, as one should essay to scale some inaccessible height. But, one incredible afternoon, it was announced to me that I had been chosen to fill the giant’s robe. I was to be paid for writing every Thursday about the books I loved; I was, too, to have my pick of all the books that came into the office—and yet, think of it, I was to be paid!

BRUNO LESSING

I first became a genius in 1902 or 1906 or thereabouts—I am not good on dates. It all began with an inspiration. You know how inspiration comes: you sit in an armchair, smoking, your mind a perfect blank, when out from the universe’s limitless space there comes an idea. The idea that came to me on that memorable day was: Why not try to make a little money on the side?

I was a reporter on the *Sun* in those days and was already famous for the small salary that I was getting. When I felt the divine afflatus within me I thought first of making the extra money by singing in grand opera—I have a wonderful voice—or by going into partnership with a friend of mine named Hagan in a select, little cafe. It was at this juncture that Samuel Hopkins Adams, then one of the editors of *McClure’s Magazine*, suggested to me that I write a short story.

I wrote one—my very first—and, to my amazement, it

was not only accepted and printed but they sent me a check for it. I remember that my friend Hagan cashed the check for me and when I told him how I had acquired it he sighed and remarked, "Some people fall in soft!"

The title of the story was "The End of the Task." As a matter of fact it was only the beginning. Because Adams suggested that I write a whole wad of short stories and publish them in book form. I have never cared much for Adams since then. Had it not been for his suggestions I might have gone into that deal with Hagan and, by this time, might have retired to the south of France.

Anyway, I wrote the stories and ultimately the book was published. It was called "Children of Men." It was a very beautiful book with a green cover. It marked an epoch in literary history. The publisher gave away nearly 5,000 copies to literary editors who wrote magnificent reviews of it in which my genius was described in detail. After that I think he sold a couple of hundred copies on which I received a royalty. Somewhere there is a room in a storage warehouse filled with the balance of the first edition. I may say, parenthetically, that I am open to any reasonable proposition and will even autograph every copy. When I consider, however, how my receipts from that book compared with what Hagan and I could have taken in on an ordinary Saturday night, I always feel sad and blame it on Samuel Hopkins Adams.

Two other collections of my short stories were afterward published and I bought myself an overcoat with the proceeds. Those were the days before overcoats were so high. Hagan recently bought himself an office building.

Nothing could have wrested this confession from me except an appeal to aid a Fund for needy authors. I am heartily in favor of this Fund and am anxious to see it grow to huge proportions. And, having obliged the Authors' League by making this contribution, I hope they will reciprocate by sending me the address of the Fund together with some blank forms of application. An author should always be prepared for the worst.

SINCLAIR LEWIS

A Yale Sophomore, with neither the picturesqueness of the lads who work their way through and study Greek in the box-offices of burlesque theatres, nor the wealth and good-fellowship of the men who are admitted to the sanctity of junior societies. A heeler of *The Yale Lit.*, exulting in tenth-rate Tennysonian verses about Lancelot, troubadours, and young females reading poetry by firelight. All the while an imagination as full of puerile make-believe as that of a ten-year-old boy.

Katherine Cecil Thurston's "The Masquerader" appeared, and the romantic read it at one sitting, in Phil Morrison's room—a rich room, with etchings! Thereafter he was in his make-believe a masquerader; now a disguised nobody thrilling the House of Commons; now a ruined Cabinet Minister.

In the old Brothers and Linonia Library he found a novel written by Israel Zangwill in his first days and signed with a pen name. The title of the novel was "The Premier and the Painter," and in plot and characters it was a prototype of "The Masquerader."

The sophomore was thrilled; he was a Discoverer; he had found a Plagiarism; he could Collate, now, like Billy Phelps or Tinker. He wrote an aged-sounding article about the similarity of the two books, and it was typed by a class-mate, Allan Updegraff, later to be a novelist and an innovator in poetry. The two discussed the name to be signed. The author had three names, whereof the first was Harry. Now, Harry, they agreed, was quite all right for Commons and the Chat Noir lunch counter but not for the 1904 literary world where one could meet geniuses who had seen Richard Le Gallienne and James Huneker, where bearded men sat up late nights to discuss George Meredith, where one could, if a whopping success, make five thousand dollars a year!

The "Harry" was buried—and the article was accepted by *The Critic*, selig.

To the sophomore's flustered delight it was taken seriously. The New York *Times* Book Review gave a mildly cynical editorial to it, and Mrs. Thurston made answer—effectively.

The sophomore was altogether certain that he had arrived. He “dashed off a little thing”—it was an era when one still said that, and spoke of one's “brain children.” The little thing was a child verse and as the author had, at the time, never had anything to do with children, it was realistic and optimistic. Not only was it taken by a woman's magazine but three dollars was, or were, paid for it!

The sophomore began to spout verse, short stories, Whimsical Essays; he kept a dozen of them on the road at once; and for the next five years he was a commercial success. True, his contributions were artistically worthless but he must have made, by working every evening and every Sunday, an average of nearly forty dollars a year.

But since then he has suspected that commercialism, even thus rewarded, is not enough—no, not enough!

LAURA JEAN LIBBEY

“Oh happiest hour of life's first stage
And e'en perhaps of any age,
Where culminates the sweet ideal,
And all beyond is fact and real.”

Two school girls, Ida and Laura, sauntered slowly home from school one sunny September afternoon, discussing speaking pieces and reading essays. Ida's poem that afternoon had proven a decided frost. Laura's essay had fared little better. A turn in the conversation led to—stories. I, Laura, said flippantly that I believed I could write a little story good enough to be printed. Ide screamed with laughter, daring me to try it.

I accepted the challenge.

Before the week was over, I stole over to the New York *Ledger* office, asking to see the gentleman who printed the *Ledger*. Mr. Robert Bonner, who had entered at that

moment, turned, looking sharply at the girl with a braid down her back and dress to her shoe-tops, who held a roll of uncovered foolscap in her hand.

I timidly stated my errand. Sitting down in a chair close by, then and there, the great publisher read the four-page story through.

I was quite surprised when he asked me if I was "quite sure I had written it myself—without help from anybody." I assured him it was a little story I had composed myself.

To my great wonderment, he said he would take it—with a proviso—that I would not come near the *Ledger* office with another story, or send a story in, or write to him about it—for the next four years.

I did not realize the extent of my promise until I thought it over as I went home—clutching tightly the five dollar bill he had given me in my hand.

I confided my wonderful secret to Ide, believing in her solemn promise that she would never breathe a word of it. Alas! Even the fidelity of a chum cannot always be depended on; the next day every one in school knew about it—and then the sale of the *Ledger* took a bound upward—all the girls bought it—to see LAURA JEAN'S story in—PRINT.

To my horror and dismay, week after week slipped by and it did not appear. When the second year dragged its slow length by and there was no sign of it, every one in the school poked sly fun at me by asking, demurely, if my story would be out next week. I was deeply humiliated. I knew my mates did not believe that I had sold a story, despite my insistence.

This calamity decided me that writing was evidently not my forte—a story that I might write would never get into print. At the end of another two years the writing-bee had winged its way from my bonnet. The story had not been printed, I had quite forgotten about it—and also that the time limit Robert Bonner had set was up. At this auspicious time I received a note from Ide, who had moved to New York, inviting me to a *matinée* she had tickets for. She

added: "It's the most wonderful play, every one says, and the girl who is the star of it is a peach. You mustn't miss it, Laura."

I went, little dreaming it was to be the turning-point of my life. The play was absorbing; I was swept along like a leaf in a whirlpool. As the curtain descended on—the end—I made up my mind that I must be an actress like the star who had so enthralled me. I was wise enough not to breathe a word of it to Ide, who had quite forgotten to tease me about the little story—if it would be printed next week—if not, why not?

Ide was exceedingly anxious to get home, so we parted in the lobby. The next moment the pictures of the star caught my eye; I stopped a few moments to admire them; I turned away and saw to my consternation that a heavy downpour had set in. There was nothing for it but to wait a little while. I heard people about me saying it was but a thunder-shower and would soon be over.

As I stood there waiting, a scheme so daring that it almost took away my breath flitted through my brain. Why not see the manager, tell him that I had determined to be a star like the one in the play I had just witnessed, and had concluded that his theatre would be quite the proper place for my debut? I acted upon the thought. I sent in my message; an usher soon returned, stating that Mr. Daniel Frohman would see me. I was ushered into his private office.

A tall, handsome, slender gentleman, seated at a desk, looked up, rose, bowed slightly, indicating a seat by his desk with a wave of his hand.

As I saw him in that moment I have remembered him ever since. Time can never efface that mental picture of Daniel Frohman, the great manager. I never afterward remembered in what manner I reached that chair or in what words I made known to him my mission. Stammering confusedly, I told him of the little story I had sold to Mr. Bonner which had never been printed, and that—now—I wanted to be a star on the stage.

He listened attentively; then, when I couldn't find one more word to say—very quietly, kindly, and in the gentlest of voices, he talked to me, graphically, eloquently, picturing stage life without its glamour. He told of the hopes and ambitions of thousands of young girls who had been lured to the footlights by just such dazzling dreams of success as I was indulging in—talented, beautiful young girls who had never had the chance of advancement come their way, and in whose breasts hope had long since died. He told me of the fair young stars on the pinnacle of fame and favor while their youth and beauty lasted—who had at last become costume women in the theatres, old, poor, and broken-hearted. He added: "The few who have reached the top owe their success—among overwhelming obstacles—to the force of some peculiar circumstance such as great beauty of face, talent of unusually high order—which, perhaps, only a line of speaking part revealed—or, perhaps, having memorized a star's part, being ready to take her place in an emergency, showing unsuspected ability," etc.

Mr. Frohman advised me most earnestly to try writing again, declaring that so conscientious a publisher as Robert Bonner would never have encouraged me by buying the little story, despite the fact that he had never used it, if "there had not been a germ of promise in it."

He added, with a pleasant smile that also made a deep impression upon me, that I might get nearer the stage by writing great stories than I then imagined, because there would always be a need for good plots for stage productions.

He talked to me for fully an hour and a half. As I rose to go he held out the same shapely white hand that had waved me to a seat, asking earnestly: "Do you think you will take my advice, and try to be an authoress, instead of an actress?" I looked up into his face, and after a few moments thinking it over, I answered emphatically, "Yes, sir! I will do as you advise."

In the years that followed after, I wondered if handsome Mr. Daniel remembered me, or my name, and if he would know how hard I was trying to write a story that might be

played on his stage. He was my first hero. If it had not been for Daniel Frohman, there would never have been in literature a Laura Jean Libbey.

JOSEPH C. LINCOLN

My first attempt at persuading an editor to exchange his magazine's money for something of my creation was a success. I meant it to be. I went gunning for that editor, one barrel loaded with a poem, the other with an illustration. As I fired both at the same time he came down without a flutter.

Prior to this assault-with-intent-to-sell I had, of course, encouraged the family by various outbreaks of genius—or of geniuses, for I seem to have had all kinds. As a boy I owned and operated a miniature theatre, for which I wrote all the plays and painted all the scenery. Once I wrote, produced and performed a comic opera, not only writing the dialogue and lyrics, painting the scenery and stealing the music, but singing all the parts myself. The effect was all that I had hoped. My aunt thought I ought to go into literature, my cousins thought I ought to go into art, and my uncle, who was fond of music, thought I ought to go into solitary confinement.

But this juvenile stuff was mere frivol compared to the real thing.

My first serious attempt at literary safe-cracking came to me as an inspiration. I was a bookkeeper at the time, a fact regretted by both my employers and myself. As I sat at my desk before my ledger, thinking—not ledgerizing for the moment, or even the forenoon, but thinking—as I sat there, a young woman bicycled by the office window. She was dressed in “bloomer” costume and everyone stared at her as a dashing, daring person. Now, confound you, you know how long ago it was!

On my desk, partially covering the ledger page, was a copy of *Puck*. In that copy was a joke about a henpecked husband; there was at least one in any copy of *Puck*. I had

been looking at *Puck*; now I looked at the young woman in bloomers. And my inspiration struck me. Having been struck, I resolved to "pass it on," to sandbag an editor with it.

On my way home that evening I bought paper, two "crow-quill" pens and a bottle of Higgins' drawing ink. That night the family heard me groaning. In the morning they knew why. I had written a poem about a girl; the poem said she was my wife, but that was just foolishness, for I hadn't any wife. I explained this to the family with great care. The wife in the poem, you see, had said, before we were married, she—well, she had boasted that *after* we were married she intended to "wear the—er—breeches," you know. Nothing smart, *Town Topicsy*, or anything of that sort; merely a joke, common saying, that's all. Well, then she took to riding a wheel in the most up-to-date costume, and, by George! there she was really wearing the—er—garment, as it were.

Clever? What do *you* think?

And, in case the editor should miss the idea in the poem, I drew a picture of it. Pen and ink, it was, with the girl in bloomers. The lower two-thirds of her was borrowed from one of Erhardt's drawings in *Puck*, but I invented her face. And I sent that poem and sketch, rolled and in a pasteboard tube, to the editor of a bicycle weekly. There was never a doubt in my mind that he would buy them. I had one of those things that soldiers have before battles—a premonition, that is what I had. I thought—I told the family—that I should probably be paid a good many dollars for that tube's contents.

I was not—quite. At the end of the month the editor wrote saying he accepted the outfit and that the business office would send a check. It did, two weeks later, a check for one dollar. I was a little disappointed. As I explained to the family, it seemed to me that either the drawing or poem sent alone would have been worth a dollar.

The poem and drawing are before me now as I write, like the pigeon-toed—no, pigeon-blood ruby, or the map of the island, in stories. As I look at them as they eventually

appeared in that long-deceased weekly, I think my youthful judgment was good. If I had sent only one of them I think it would have been worth a dollar. If I had sent neither I think it would have been worth at least two dollars—or even more.

GRACE DENIO LITCHFIELD

As I began writing in prose and verse as soon as I could spell—perhaps somewhat before I had attained that point in my education—my earliest effusion is lost in the shades of antiquity. As, moreover, upon reaching the age of discretion I praiseworthy destroyed all my writings prior to my twentieth year, fearing lest a too lenient Literary Executor should present them to a long-suffering public, I have, luckily, no records of juvenilia left.

I began publishing only after losing a beloved parent, to whose memory I wished to put up a window with money of my own earning.

Selecting three of my poems, therefore, I sent them off to the then three foremost magazines. Receiving all three poems back, I changed them about, mailing them to the same periodicals. Receiving all three back for the second time, I once more changed them about and sent them to the same editorial offices, requesting an immediate answer, as I was sailing for Europe in a week's time.

In proof of the value of perseverance, *Lippincott* promptly accepted the submitted poem, "The Milky Way," returning me a check for twelve dollars in payment—the tiny nest-egg for my window, which before long was in place in Grace Church, Brooklyn.

My first short story, "One Chapter," had better luck from the start, at once finding acceptance with *The Century Magazine*, as did my first novel, "Only an Incident," which was brought out by the Putnams, and in both firms I formed friendships that have lasted unbrokenly through all the subsequent years. Thus much, at least, do I gratefully owe to my pen.

JOHN LUTHER LONG

I fear (and regret!) that "Madame Butterfly" must be considered my maiden effort, though I had quite ceased to be maiden at that time; and though, again, I have a vague and guilty recollection of certain fearsome verses beginning with "O," none of which I remember and which I trust posterity will not.

But "Madame Butterfly" and I are august accidents on the highway of letters, inasmuch as I had not the least intention of becoming an absurd Literary Person. I was at that time, indeed, practising that distinguished and sinister profession called The Law.

However, perhaps because my profession *was* sinister, or because I practised it too sedulously for a loafer, I suffered what the petit jury of doctors called a profound nervous collapse. And when the said doctors after months of trying decided to send me away (perhaps before I should go away without their sending), I was carried off to a little house in a little village by the sea, and there again put to bed at what seemed the bottom of a well, where only the stars could be seen.

Now, stars are most lovely things at night, and shiny; but, for the day and all the day, nothing but stars—even the Milky Way or the unloosed bands of Orion—dare an earthworm say that even these exalted galaxies of suns and worlds might become tiresome? So the nerves and the various allied thingumbobs collapsed a bit more, and ever a bit more, until the new jury of sea-doctors said, terribly, that I must cease thinking of my lost law practice (which wasn't an insuperable task) and think of something entirely different.

And the entirely different thing chanced to be "Madame Butterfly." I suppose I might stop there; but to save those languishing authors who demand the details of our sufferings—is it not? And the above is easier said than done.

It seemed that though I might not sit up in my well, there was no reason why I might not take a typewriter

(machine) to bed with me; nor further, why I might not balance it on my stomach while I wrote. And this I learned to do. However, there then appeared to be a writing-paper famine in the little house in the little village by the sea, though there was plenty of manila wrapping paper which had been used but once—for meat or bread, don't you know—and some of this I tore neatly into sheets, approximately the size of this small one, and on these, on the typewriter, on my stomach, in bed, in the little house in the little village by the lit—sea, “Madame Butterfly” was written.

And now follows the secret part of the story of “Butterfly” which I am loath to confess but which the searching cross-examination of many Who's-Who's is so likely to disclose that, rather than have it dragged from my soul by some Third-Degree process, I take opportunity by the forelock and drag it out of my own soul; though I know not why I should, since I alone know the secret, save that I am inherently honest. Yet, being so, I must admit that until now I had meant never to reveal this dark secret. *Allons!*

It so happened that in this village by the sounding sea there had drifted a number of practitioners of one art or another—you know the furtive way of our kind!—an etcher, an engraver, a miniature painter, a pen artist, a poet, an opera singer, a composer, a suspected bigamist, and last and best in my life, an angelic old lady who edited a magazine on cookery. I have called this little old lady angelic because if there are crowns and harps about The Throne she is there with hers. Now, this angelic old lady had taken to dropping into my well to cackle a few cheerful words which might shame the lazy sick man out of his bed and into the sunshine and the rain. The words are her own. I plead *non vult contendere*. And, to the surprise of the sea-doctors and myself, she was doing it!

Well, on one of these angel-visits, coming into the well suddenly, she surprised me with the typewriter (machine) on my stomach aforesaid, the floor strewn with the sheets of manila, (then twice used) which the keys in a fine frenzy

rolling had madly flung off. She laughed—indeed, she nearly laughed herself to Kingdom-Come, for she was as frail as a bird—then she took the typewriter off my stomach that I might also laugh, and finally picked up and arranged per page the twice-used manila, while I quailed in fear of the inevitable.

“But—Good Lord,” she screamed, “you’re not writing a story—not *you?*”

“Y-yes,” I admitted, sheepishly. “The sea-doctors told me to think of something different—and—and this is it—don’t you think? Of course, it’s nothing like Chitty on Contracts, but—”

Meanwhile I was cunningly trying to get the twice-used manila away from her. But she had caught a phrase or two and she threatened me with the destruction of all she held unless I should promise to send her the whole. Well—I was a sick-a-bed-chap—and I promised. For if I had risen to grapple with her I would have ruptured my diaphragm—or something. (The Sea-Doctors!)

So, being an honest gentleman, as abovesaid, I sent her the manila when it was all used up and the story had to stop, and in a couple of hours she came running across the lots with the tears running across her face crying as she approached the well:

“Oh, my dear, my dear, you have created a masterpiece. Forgive me for laughing, and I’ll forgive you the typewriter—where it was—and never, never tell!”

And she never did.

Now, perhaps strangely enough to you who are case-hardened authors prepense, this business of a masterpiece made me peevish. For I thought lightly enough of literary masterpieces then. Law was the perfection of reason. (Blkstn II, 7.) What could be greater than that?

“My dear friend,” said I to the angelic old lady—for I was getting better—and more cocky than better—“there is only one masterpiece, and that is Coke upon Littleton. And the only other I should wish to write is another volume of Chitty.” I really said that.

“Stop your nonsense,” cried the dear old lady, “and get out of bed. You’re alive. Send this to the best magazine in America—the land of best magazines.” And she seemed to think that this was *The Century*, and not her own journal of cookery.

Now, this beautiful old lady was terrible both in her wrath and her joy and, since you know that she bullied me into showing her my secret story, you will not be surprised to learn that I was frightened into promising to do as she commanded. However, I sneaked on her for a day or two, and thereby hangs the worst of this sorry tale. She again dashed across the sand-lots, this time madly waving a copy of the New York *Herald*.

“Wire immediately,” she cried, en route, “and get that story back!”

“It hasn’t gone—yet,” I confessed, meekly, preparing for trouble.

“Thank God!” she said, and breathlessly disclosed that the *Herald* she held in her hand offered a prize of ten thousand dollars for stories, and she left me no doubt about what direction that ten thousand would take after “Madame Butterfly” reached the *Herald* office.

Well—*peccavi!* There had been doctors’ bills—and nurses’ bills—and apothecaries’ bills—and masseurs’ bills—and no clients for many a long month—and ten thousand dollars looked sweet and glorious. So I sent the manuscript to the *Herald* (under a name which I continue to keep secret, unless the Authors’ League shall order its revelation) and almost immediately, in a minute it seemed, it returned to me, like the dove to the good old ark, with the most beautifully printed slip I have ever seen—the first of ’em, in fact! It was yellow with real gold borders and it spent most of its time detailing the Editors’ distress that my story did not precisely please ’em, and casually announced that the ten thousand dollars had been sent to Mary Wilkins for her story called “The Long Arm.”

“*Sic transit gloria, etc.,*” said I.

"*Sic* nothing!" shrieked my angelic old friend, almost bloody in her wrath. "We'll show 'em!"

"Let's!" agreed I, gaily, and smiled and smiled and was a villain still. For that day I had walked ten steps in God's own sunlight. And I was clothed—in regular trousers, etc.—and in my right mind. What cared I for "Madame Butterfly" now? She had served as the different thing and I was through with her. For me again began to loom gloriously the forum and battles, and good old *stare decisis*—the Great Game!

"They're not editors—they're street-sweepers—" The dear old lady was firing a Parthian arrow after the editors!—"and when this has been heard around the world I'll send 'em a copy! Off to *The Century* with it!"

Well—I sent it to *The Century*, with a singular lack of interest. I was getting well. And, perhaps, the rest you know—or guess.

But my angelic old friend never sent a copy to those editors, for she went away to the Lotus Fields. And I never did—because I was kept busy, for some time, palming off on other editors stories "just like Madame Butterfly"—and because I was so thankful that they never gave me that ten thousand dollars.

But I have not yet got back to the forum and *stare decisis*.

I should like to tell you of the friends the story brought me in all lands and of the enemies in our own—of two naval officers from different coasts each of whom wanted to shoot the Long who had smirched the American Navy—if he could be found by the three of us; of how little there is in the story to deserve the affection with which it is received save the accident of illness which gave it the humanity to which the Great Heart always responds—and many another thing, had I not already exceeded the measure set for me.

So, *Gomen nasai. Oitoma itashimasho.*

GERTRUDE LYNCH

Several years ago a remarkable story appeared in a periodical, which never adorned a news-stand. I forget the title of the tale but the publication was called *Gertie's Weekly*, after its owner, founder and business manager. Contributions for this were stuck through a slit in a wooden box nailed to the door of a greenhouse, belonging to a henchchild like myself dallying in the mature twelves, at which age I believe genius must show its existence.

Few of these manuscripts ever saw the light. I preferred my own sparkling dramas having, even at that early age, a presentiment of editorial functions. However, with a sweet smile, I always thanked the contributors and begged them for more. We didn't have rejection slips then, we were only in two syllables. Paper and ink were plentiful, which accounted for the size of the publication; and not having to save three quarters of the space plus for advertisements, inspiration was allowed to burn itself to a cinder, and scraps could always be pinned on when I thought of another chapter.

It was decided in family conclave that *Gertie's Weekly* interfered with Gertie's studies and the periodical was first censored, then suppressed. So went out another beacon that might have steered the bark of twentieth century literature safely to port!

After this came an interlude when my writing was done behind closed doors and I literally burned the midnight oil. I did not dare send the stories out—one of them might return—of course, by accident; but to have even that solitary one come back would subject me to the ridicule of a small town where whatever the postmaster knew everybody knew—and bulky manuscripts with postage to pay shrieked their errand aloud to the four winds of heaven. These stories were, of course—as I was an extremely cheerful young person—filled with morbid love affairs, lovely heroines committed suicide or simply pined away, when all who had made them suffer came and wept over their coffins. My

waste-paper basket bulged with them until a rent came in its wicker sides, which in certain flickering lights looked like the malicious grin on a flat, pale face. It haunts me yet.

When the country mouse came to the city—and I have been an urban of the urbanites ever since, my timidity changed to rashness. I developed a Manhattan hide. I actually posted my stories and when they came back talked loudly for the landlady's benefit of impatient editors who could not wait for proofsheets.

The first story accepted was called "The Story of a Tenor Voice." It was psychoanalytic to a degree—I cannot say to what degree, for I didn't know there was such a thing as psychoanalysis. The editor wrote me a fervent letter and seemed terribly ashamed to offer thirty dollars. It seemed a tremendous sum to me but I had grown wary and accepted it condescendingly. Then, for several weeks, I stopped writing to spend it—not in reality but in imagination.

The story appeared. The check did not.

After waiting a reasonable time, considering my impatience, I wrote a nice little note, telling the editor that the check had gone astray. I received a newspaper clipping in which it was stated that the magazine had suspended.

About this time I submitted a story to a literary agent who advertised to "read and advise for five dollars." She advised me to send it to *The Atlantic Monthly*. I did.

Then the doctor prescribed iron and I think the iron entered my soul, judging from the plots and endings of several subsequent stories.

For I kept on writing, which shows that I really "belong"; and, following the demise of the magazine in which "The Story of a Tenor Voice" appeared, I assisted in the literary obsequies of several periodicals which, soon after publishing my effusions, quietly passed on. They never paid before they died.

I also hold the speed record for returned manuscripts. One of mine, illustrated profusely by an artist friend, and

sent to a well-known publishing house down town, was returned by messenger and reached home before we did.

When I saw "A Kiss for Cinderella" on its opening night I remembered that one of my earliest stories was founded on an episode similar to one in the play, only my New England woman exacted a dollar apiece for her opinions, while Cinderella was satisfied with a penny. I leave you to judge the respective values of the stories by that. Nor do I accuse Sir James Barrie of plagiarism. Where there is so much gratuitous advice in the world, it is strange that others have not made it a salable commodity.

The very editor to whom I sold "Aunt Matilda's Opinions," who was the head of a fiction syndicate, was generous in this respect. He talked with me a long time about my ambitions and then advised me to change them. The editor of a Sunday newspaper for whom I wrote interviews and special articles for eight years once admired a hat I wore. When I told him I had trimmed it, he asked me why I didn't keep on trimming hats. He thought I was clever at it.

There was no explosive breaking into print in my case. If you knock at a door long and hard enough you will finally get in, if only to stop your noise. Sometimes the door opens only a crack and you have to use your foot as a wedge. I have often held my foot in a crack.

The years between these early triumphs and the present have been filled with work of all sorts—books, stories, specials, editorials, reviews. I have attempted only a modest one-act play—but I have hopes. The literary calendar has shown rain and sun, snow and sleet, heat and cold, success and failure, triumph and despair, hopes and fears. In this I differ from none of my clan, and the value of the emphasis of these revelations I am sure is that we like to know that we are all playing the same game and playing it like sportsmen to the best of our ability.

The hardest, most thrilling and least satisfying of my work, from the literary standpoint, was my war work as representative of "The Vigilantes," a syndicate of artists

and authors who gave the products of pen and brush to the Cause.

I went from trench village to tango town, from death and destruction of the hospitals to the gaieties of the ports and leave areas. The joy-writers who went over after the armistice did the best war writing, as a class, for they did not get near enough to spoil their perspectives. But I am sure that no one who was "in it" would be without their memory of their special thrills and no word of publisher and editor that the public is not interested in war stories can convince us that they are right in submitting to its decree and not building up a full and splendid war literature such as other countries have.

There is a Browning poem—one, you remember, in which the making of a man's soul is likened to the making of a flute—the reed is torn from the bank, the pith is dug out, the rough bark is hacked and hewed. Then it is ready for the music. So the god Pan plays, and,

"The sun on the hill forgot to die,
And the lilies revived, and the dragon-fly
Came back to dream on the river—"

Few of us sing a song so wonderful that even nature listens, that the sun hesitates to go, that the dying rose re-blooms, that the gauze-winged insect returns to its beautiful visions—few of us, indeed. But how fortunate to be of the many from whom the few are chosen, a member of the most glorious profession in the world!

PETER CLARK MACFARLANE

It was eternities ago, when Los Angeles was a small town. My home was in a little white cottage far over on Boyle Heights. My work was in a five-story squat brick building—it looks squat now—at the corner of Broadway and Third Street, then well out toward the weed patches and the boom-stake lots of '87. From the Bradbury Block to the rounded bosom of Boyle Heights ran one leg

of a system of cable street railroad; but, to save carfare, I used to watch the little crablike dummy and its trailer load of human freight go sailing by; I walked.

Walking three miles in the morning to work, carrying one's luncheon, and walking three miles back at night hungry to one's dinner, there is much time for thought, for dreams and for idle speculations.

In one of the idlest of these dreams there came to me the notion that I could be an author, that I could build fiction character, slowly, solidly, trait by trait, until I got the hue of life upon its cheek and that, creator-like, e'en I might breathe the breath of vital action into its lungs. Yes; I perceived that I could do it. I could be a Hugo or a Dickens. Impartially I appraised my talents and unblushingly admitted they were sufficient.

But the career of a novelist did not appeal to me particularly. It was my ultimate intention at that time to be President of the United States at about the age at which I find myself writing these lines, and to be a mere Balzac or Tarkington—not that I had heard of Tark twenty-six years ago—had no allure. So I dismissed the idea. I bade the vision flit. As to the foundling amiable pup that unwelcome trails the heel, I said: "Begone! 'S-s-s-st!"

But, after a true Freudian principle, this dream disguised itself and crept back upon me unrecognized. All day I wrote with the Remington No. 2, being a stenographer in a railroad office; but now my fingers began to feel an itch to write with the pen, with the pencil, with anything, but to write! It was an impulse to Spencerian chirography—no particular words, just chirography, just aimless capital letters on the borders of the newspaper pages, on the corners of calendars, on, when they were clean enough to show a black mark, the edges of my cuffs.

But chirography is the worst thing I do, even now when the years have disclosed so many things that I do badly; hence, this persistent practice of chirography for chirography's sake must early have demonstrated its own futility; notwithstanding which that deceptive Freudian complex

kept me scribbling—aimlessly, restlessly, resultlessly until one certain Sunday afternoon. Upon the table—dining table at certain hours of the day, family reading, social and sewing table at other hours—upon the table chanced to lie a largest size official reporter's note book, into which I had the habit of tracing profound criticisms of the political articles I read—part of my preparation for the Presidency, you see.

This note book naturally enough got itself into my hand, and just for matter to write, I fell to putting sentences together about a raccoon hunt I had enjoyed in timber contiguous to the State University of Florida, then located at Lake City. Now, perhaps because a raccoon hunt perforce takes place at night, there is much that is dramatic about it, with scenes that impress the memory and later may stimulate the imagination. Moreover, there had really been a succession of exciting events on that particular hunt—events that illustrated the characters of dogs and raccoons and colored people and poor white trash and big-eyed immature university students, and I began presently to be interested more in *what* I wrote than in *how* I wrote, which was the dastardly success of the Freudian deception. From a practice Marathon in penmanship the thing began to be an essay in composition.

Some fifteen or eighteen years before, either *Scribners'* or *The Eclectic* had published a series of stories dealing with country sports in the South, penned by some master of a facile and a vivid style whose name no longer lives to be done a doubtful honor here; but these stories, found in the bound volumes of the magazine, had relieved the boredom of many a rainy day in boyhood. Now they leaped into my mind and became my model.

The paper was just rough enough to take the lead nicely, the pencil soft, and the sentences rolled on and on.

So, also, did the incidents of that coon hunt; they grew more and more exciting. Then, all at once, they petered out, like a baying dog who, suddenly cowed, curls tail between legs and departs for under the house. There were

not enough of them to make a story like the old *Scribner* stories. They had a sequence but no inevitableness and no satisfying climax. Therefore, because I felt the challenge to go on and make a finish, imagination was called upon to supply the deficiency of material and it did its humble best. It supplied, also, coherence, objective, obstacle, suspense and the semblance of a plot.

I got real interested in that story; but at the finish was ashamed for the canine hero I had made out of one of the laziest, most cowardly, worthless hounds that ever sucked an egg; ashamed, too, of the hero I made of myself, and of the tremendous total of falsehoods with which I had weakly embellished this originally honest tale in order to finish with a fiction flourish.

But, when I read it aloud, much neighbor hair rose on end and suburban eyes gaped wondrously.

I was awed, too, to discover that these listeners knew not which parts were honest truth and which the libellous fiction; nor cared, since they were so vastly intrigued by the mixture, which, as they opined, was the chief end of literature, anyhow. It was generally allowed that I ought to send that "piece" to *The Century* or *The Atlantic Monthly* or *The Christian Endeavor World*.

But the author had another idea. The Los Angeles *Times* was then a smaller paper than it is now and more saturated through and through with the personality of its creator, Harrison Gray Otis—rest his restless, irascible soul! And on certain pages of its Sunday Supplement it boasted and made display of the California literary product, even as it boasted of the citrus product. To this department I committed through the mails my manuscript.

I waited months and months to hear from that precious effusion. I never heard. Several times I plucked up courage to walk at noontimes down Broadway to the *Times* building and to the very first step of the stairs that led upward to a bearding of the thistle-tempered editor in his den. But my courage always failed me. Perhaps there was logic in the failure. While the manuscript was unreported on,

I had a hope—however faint, a hope—and in those days hope was rare and the faintest one was succulent. Once I met the editor, that hope would be dispelled, for he would only tell me that my precious pages had gone into the incinerator months before.

Still, therefore, I had my hope; but that had faded to a hallowed memory when, one Lord's Day morning, I reclined upon an old blue denim lounge and read the *Sunday Times*.

Thumbing casually through the literary section, my eye was offended by two or three disfigurements upon the solid page before me. They were outline drawings of the most impossible of negro characters. As to drawing, they were the worst I have ever looked upon, grotesque, proportionless, pithecanthropic, with spots of white paper for eyeballs. I laughed at their ridiculousness. In my superior knowledge of the plantation darkey I was scorning the man who could have so pictured them—when my eye was struck with the legend beneath the first of these illustrative absurdities.

It had a familiar look. It was in quotations. I read it and dynamite went off in my brain. It was a quotation from my story!

My eyes flew to the top of the page and lo, my name was there! It was my story—smeared all over the page. In an instant joy was smeared all over my face like jam. I lifted shrill, yipping yells which must have alarmed the neighbors and confirmed them in their growing suspicion that I was a "nut." How right they were I never suspected then.

My good wife came running to me with dough upon her hands from the making the crust of the humble meat pie which was to be our Sunday dinner. I showed her the page, with my name at the top, and with some perfectly wonderful words at the bottom: "From a New Contributor." We fell into each other's arms. Her doughy fingers fondled my hair, searching out bumps and deciding which ones she and adversity had given me, and which one represented the God-given genius of authorship.

I called my three-year-old and showed the page to her and made the glorious explanation. She received it gravely.

"Papa's 'tory," she said contentedly, and smoothed her small gingham apron as with a new sense of dignity since authorship was in her paternity.

I showed it to my drooling yearling and he drooled and grunted, coaxing me to take him and toss him and let newspapers go hang.

All day long I lay and rolled to and fro upon the old blue denim couch in succeeding frenzies of delight. All week I waited breathless for a check. By the succeeding Saturday desperation had succeeded joy. I bearded the jaguar. He smiled at me benignly—some one who knew the editor's reputation will not believe he smiled—but he did, and gave me an order on the business office for eleven dollars. The mischief was done.

That was my maiden effort. It may have been all a terrible mistake. The record is not yet complete.

HAROLD MACGRATH

My first literary effort was a short story in competition for a prize of five dollars offered by my high-school magazine. Le'me see; I must have been fourteen. I have forgotten who won that five; I know *I* didn't.

My father read my story before I submitted it. It was just before the family—three of us—sat down to the evening meal. He said it was great stuff: four hundred words to kill off three hundred Indians, and one hundred words describing the funeral. That was the beginning of twenty-odd years of crime!

I did not have to peddle my first story. It did not go from office to office. I didn't have any heartaches. Bang! and the thing was done.

Luck? No, sir. Back of what looks like luck were ten years of strenuous newspaper work. And when I say work I mean it. Since eighteen I have been partially deaf; and to hang on in the newspaper game with impedimenta of that order! Why, I was always inventing some new stunt to

make myself necessary. Without realizing it, I was training my imagination for today!

One night, after we'd had a jolly supper, a friend and myself sat "gassing" about books. I told him I had a story in my head. He asked for it. I related it in synopsis; and he waxed enthusiastic.

"Write it!"

"Oh, but I haven't got the time."

"Make time!"

I started "Arms and the Woman" at one o'clock A. M., when I got home. I finished it within two months. I sold it to McClure's Syndicate for the magnificent sum of two hundred dollars—which was a lot of money in those days. Doubleday, McClure Co. liked the story well enough to put it between covers. And that's all there is to it.

My advice to all those who wish to write is, broil a little while on the grill of newspaper work. You learn brevity, directness; you learn to make words count; you learn the art of holding your reader in suspense. And over and above that, you have seen life, on the mounts and in the pits.

PERCY MACKAYE

I remember—the month was May.

That was auspicious to start with.

We were "camping in," as we called it, in my aunt's country cottage.

I remember—it was past noon of a faultless day. After infinite procrastinations, Spring at last had come—cloudless, golden, singing. In the lawn by the little cottage dandelions caroused, still unprohibited by the lawn-mower. Cardinal grosbeaks and indigo birds carolled in the apple trees just budding a deep red. Across the road in the field, on the gold-green tide of the new grass, quaker-ladies gleamed like crests of pale gray foam; and beyond the miles of low hills smouldering into woodland bloom, the white church spires of Groton glinted serene.

Serene, too, was the brown belfry of the revolutionary church, nestled nearby among the Shirley maple-tops. Indeed, all the world was serene, idyllic, new-born—only—the dishes were unwashed.

Yet, it was not *merely* Spring.

I recall as well how the season conspired with the rising sap of youth to render a maiden effort inevitable. I was myself in my fifteenth year. The excellent noon dinner cooked by that adept in all Yankee ambrosias, my Aunt Sadie, was hardly yet a memory; the aroma of sweet pickles and the lingering savor of deep-dish apple pie (last fruition of winter-cellarred Baldwins) still quickened my tongue with retrospections, so that its utterances became atavistic, as only the tongue of Fourteen knows how to be. So it recurred to the Spring-time of our Pilgrim fathers:

“When the leaf-buds of the oak are as large as the ears of the field mouse, then (I quoted)—then is come the hour for the planting of corn” (and the composing of corn-ballads!).

And I gazed at our budding oak-tree; and verily the hour had come—but there were the dishes unwashed and my aunt was waiting. Unnumbered times *she* had washed them but this was *my* disciplinary turn, for the other children having done their shifts stood eager and waiting to watch mine.

In Springs of earlier years, “efforts”—embryonic, amorphous, half-articulate—had stirred the roots of my tongue and choked by childish utterance; but none had emerged till now which might deserve the full-blown, vernal name of “maiden.” Perhaps it was because till now the serene conjunction of May and immaturity had never been jarred by counter-struggles of the soul; but now the needful inoculation of “impending fate” had precipitated in my blood a virus-fever of “dramatic conflict” which could have but one tragic dénouement—a maiden utterance in verse.

For at that moment, though all heaven’s gate was being stormed by battalions of bobolinks, transmuted to the imagi-

nary larks of Avon's bard, yet there were the unwashed dishes and my aunt still waiting towel in hand ready to wipe them, but only to the ritual of *my* washing. Moreover, there were the expectant eyes of my brethren, brimming with an awful joy.

And so it befell that in May of my fifteenth year—from the throes of a post-prandial conflict between Pan and dish-pan—my maiden sonnet was born.

Publish it not in Gath nor in the streets of Askalon, but publish it now in *The Book of The Authors' League*, for the Fund, "describing the incidents connected with the publications of the very first literary work of well-known authors." For so shall all "unlucky authors, that seek to secure their Second Serial Rights to Health and Happiness" take heart herewith in witnessing this very first publication of the very first literary work of my well-known authorship, after its well-deserved oblivion of nine-and-twenty years.

Hic jacet the Maiden Effort:

TO A DISH-PAN

O fallen pan! Benighted, unclassed pan!
 Despised receptacle of outcast dishes!
 Faith, thou wast made to be the bane of man
 And wash away his soul's most hopeful wishes.
 Is he forever doomed with soapy mop
 To stand before thy rim and rinse and wash?
 To hover o'er the dirty grayish slop
 That round thy greasy sides doth swill and swash?
 Ah, soon will he leave courses out of dinner
 Who is obliged to wash his dishes after;
 Each new-born day will find him growing thinner,
 Each meal-time less and less inclined to laughter.
 But stop! More words to thee my pen refuses,
 Then how much more—the poor, disgusted Muses!

ORISON SWETT MARDEN

My struggles began when, a double orphan at the age of seven, I was bound out by my guardian, successively, in five different families in the backwoods of New Hampshire. There I began the training and experience in the School of Hard Knocks which ultimately led to the writing of my first book, "Pushing to the Front."

All the year around, with the exception of short periods in winter, when I attended the district school, I had to work very hard for a bare living. Even when I was nearly of age I got only thirteen dollars a month in summer and in winter nothing but my board and clothes.

In a very sparsely settled country twenty-four miles from the nearest railroad station. Books were very scarce, and I saw few of any kind outside the school text-books, until I was grown up. Then, one fateful red-letter day, I happened to get hold of Smiles' "Self Help."

That day marked the turning point in my life. I read and re-read the wonderful book. It was a revelation to me. The stories of poor boys climbing to the top so inspired me that I resolved to get out of the woods, get an education at any cost, and make something of myself.

Up to this time my ambition had not been stirred, and I had not begun to realize that I was such an ignoramus, not having even a decent common school education. I never dreamed that I could get a college education or that there would ever be any chance for me to do anything more than make a very poor living at hard work as others all about me were doing.

But after reading "Self Help," something kept saying to me "There is a chance for you, and you can do something and amount to something." The picture of Samuel Smiles talking to poor boys, gathered from the streets of London in an old shed, about success in life, showing them their possibilities and trying to arouse their ambition by pointing out that though they were poor and apparently had no opportunity, they might become great men even as other

boys as poor as they, had thrilled my imagination. It not only awakened me to a knowledge of my own possibilities but created in me a burning desire to develop them, with the object of one day doing something that would stimulate and encourage struggling American lads like myself, who had no money, no friends or relatives, to develop and make the most of all the powers Nature had given them.

In fact, I resolved then to begin to get together material for a book which I hoped would some time be to the American boy what Smiles' "Self Help" had been to the English boy.

By dint of extra hard work and the most rigid economy I managed to scrape together two dollars, every cent of which I spent for a large blank note book. On the opening page I printed in big letters the motto I had adopted: "*Let every occasion be a great occasion, for you cannot tell when fate may be taking your measure for a larger place*"; and in it I planned to jot down every thought and suggestion which came to me as material for my dream book. Nothing that came into my life afterward meant quite so much, was quite so precious to me as that blank note book, in which was outlined the first rough beginnings of "Pushing to the Front."

Not yet being of age when I appealed to my guardian to let me go away somewhere to school, he objected very seriously, and threatened to post me in the county paper if I attempted to leave where I was. But in spite of threats and opposition, dressed in my best suit, consisting of a woolen shirt, a shabby coat and trousers and a pair of cowhide boots, I started one day for the Colby Academy, New London, New Hampshire, some fifty miles away.

This being my first exit from the wilderness, I was surprised to find how many well-dressed boys and girls there were at the Academy, many of them from the city, and all infinitely further advanced in their studies than I was. In fact, I was ashamed to start in where I belonged, which was pretty far back even in a district school. But I managed to push ahead, paying my way by waiting on the table in the

students' boarding house, chopping cord wood in the woods, sawing wood, etc. And always, in reading, and in my odd leisure moments, I was thinking of and working on my dream book, adding new material, filling new note books, from every possible source.

This continued all the way up from my academy days through my college course and post-graduate courses at different universities, until after receiving my degrees I went to Kearny, Nebraska. There I finished the manuscript of "Pushing to the Front," and prepared the manuscripts for several other books.

Then came the tragedy which in a few hours wiped out all the results of years of hard work.

The hotel in which I was living and of which I was proprietor was burned to the ground. Everything I had, including my precious manuscripts and all my valuable note books, was destroyed. Clad only in my underclothing, I barely escaped from the building with my life, being knocked down the stairs from the top floor by burning timbers from the roof.

When I found that every scratch of a pen, all of my precious note books, and everything I had was gone, while the hotel was still smouldering I went down the street and bought a twenty-five cent note book in which I began to re-write whatever I could remember of the lost manuscripts. This was done in a room over a livery stable, where I boarded myself.

While never losing sight of my first ambition, up to this time I had been a business man. But after the fire and the terrible Nebraska drought in which I lost all of my savings, nearly fifty thousand dollars, I decided to give up business, return to Boston and finish re-writing the manuscript of "Pushing to the Front," and try to start *The Success Magazine*.

Not being familiar with publishers' methods, when my manuscript was completed, thinking it might take me many months, perhaps a year, to get a publisher to accept it, I made three copies and submitted one to each of three differ-

ent publishing houses at the same time—Houghton, Mifflin & Co., T. Y. Crowell Co., and another Boston house. To my great surprise, all three wanted the book. I finally gave it to Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

So doubtful was I of the success of "Pushing to the Front" that even after I had signed a contract I went to the publishers and asked them to let me have the manuscript and re-write it. Mr. Horace Scudder, then editor of *The Atlantic Monthly*, who had passed upon the manuscript, advised me not to touch it. But even then I was not satisfied, and thought I never again would give a publisher such a poor book.

It went through twelve editions in the first year of publication, however, and has since been translated into practically all the leading languages of the world. Mr. Gladstone offered to write the introduction to the London edition, but unfortunately he died before this was completed. "Pushing to the Front" has been used for many years as a text book in the government schools of Japan and in the schools of many other countries. It has probably gone through more than two hundred and fifty editions, many more than any other of my forty-odd books.

My experience with "Pushing to the Front" convinced me that no author can really gauge his own work. I would have been glad to sell the manuscript for a thousand dollars. I did sell the German rights for a song, and the German publishers have sold in the neighborhood of seventy-five thousand copies.

GEORGE MADDEN MARTIN

My maiden effort at story-writing, if I may put it so, was a quite young *matron's* effort. And I can see now that she was younger even than her years; or than she herself was aware.

The manuscript when completed was carried to her husband. The American husband proverbially is chivalric; is kind.

The dialogue succeeding, as recollected, went something as follows; being a plea on his part for what may be called the verities; or even the veri-similitudes.

"You are asking me for an opinion given—er—in earnest?"

"Certainly; I don't quite *gather* what you *mean*?"

"No; I fancy not. To instance: You thus far have never been out of your native land?"

"Well; I know that; but *this* is a *story*."

"You have a reasonably fair right to assume that you know something about the American Child, having been one yourself."

"But this is a *romance*—"

"You are passably acquainted with the English language as spoken in the United States. You have had in your day a few lessons in French, and also in German. But to my knowledge so far as it goes, you never heard spoken a word of Spanish, patois or any other variety, in your life—"

"I bought myself a Spanish-English dictionary—"

"—and so, I'm wondering *why, why*—I say *wondering*, since I don't profess to follow the involutions of the creative mind—*why* with an average lifetime of things to write of you do know a modicum about, you center on Spanish children in an alien setting, speaking a patois that you never heard."

Later, by a year or two, I wondered this myself. The story, however, by title, "Don Soldier," was accepted at its first arriving place. I'm wondering if that editor, whose subsequent career proves him a most discerning man, after all these years, would remember why.

It was a two-part serial, and brought for those days a very generous check. Was that manuscript accepted and held, in the hope of better things to follow?

It was never published. Why? The answer to this makes the story of my maiden effort.

The tale was followed by others in rapid succession. These going to the same office, and staying there, appeared promptly in print.

Then came another nature of effort; a story this was for the volume to be, at the time of its appearance, called by Frank Norris, "The Epic of the Slate Pencil," and now known as "Emmy Lou." It will be grasped from this, Emmy Lou being what she is for at least attempted verity, that the marital adviser of the writer by now had induced her to try her hand at what she knew.

The consequence of this essay at real life was—

Yes; that editor already referred to will bear me out in this. The maiden effort was bought back by the perpetrator of it; and to this day has not reappeared.

A word as to this, however. That story of place and creatures that never were on land or sea was accepted at its first offering. And "A Little Feminine Casabianca," the story from Emmy Lou, went to and fro, poor dove, on the face of the waters, the fighting spirit of the writer being aroused; her record being eleven temporary abiding places. Until she came to rest, her sister-flock of Emmy Lou tales following her, at *McClure's Magazine*.

It might be interesting, in view of this recital of her previous misadventures, to know just what this rejected child's subsequent sales have been. Myself, I find, when I come to think about it, that I do not know.

SIDNEY McCALL

My first book, "Truth Dexter," was written in Japan because I was homesick for Alabama: my second, "The Breath of the Gods," four years later in Alabama, because I was homesick for Japan.

This sentence, just achieved, intrigues me with a flavor as of epigrams, and a less doubtful quality of balance. Having produced them, I shall let well enough alone, and start at once on the requested story of my first published novel.

I am writing "first" advisedly. I cannot use the more felicitous term suggested by our editor and call it a "maiden" effort, for not only was I a married woman at the time, but

"Truth Dexter" would never have seen the light except for my husband.

It was Spring-time! Spring-time in Japan! A synonym for earthly paradise!

I was surrounded with beauty—comfort—love—with everything desirable, and yet so wilful is this human heart of ours that sometimes, in lonely moments, I would feel the cold touch of exile and would find myself dreaming, with wet eyes close shut, of all my "home-folks" in a distant land—of Spring-time in the Alabama pines.

I could almost hear the tiny azure iris pushing its way up through the sandy soil and see at the tip of red-oak saplings, yet without a leaf, tangles of yellow jessamine scenting all the air.

I had been taught by my father (how Henri Fabre would have loved my blessed Dad!)—to know and love our forests—the trees, the ferns, the flowers—the bird, and animal and insect life of them.

My father was a poet, and my mother not only a writer of good verse but a treasury of English poetry in herself. From these two I gained early in childhood a mental outlook which was neither material nor sordid.

I was allowed to choose and read books for myself—poetry, mythology and fairy tales, especially the latter. Indeed, I somewhat defiantly kept up an alleged belief in fairies long after I knew that it was lost.

When I went to Japan to live it did not take me long to love their lovely forests, too. Yet they were always just a bit exotic. Worst of all, I knew that if, by a miracle of deftness, an Oriental fairy should be surprised asleep, it would surely have hair of a raven blackness and wear a bright kimono.

But this is divergence from the given theme. When to my husband I confessed the absurd homesickness that had overtaken me he said, "Why not write a book about your Alabama?"

I had never written a book or ever expected to begin one. It seemed then too gigantic an undertaking. I had pub-

lished a slender book of verse and a few very poor short stories, but these were all. Yet the thought grew until I said to myself, "Why not!"

Thus it was started. My heroine, perforce, became a Southern girl taken away from the environment she loved. I had at that time been to no great Northern city except Boston; and so to Boston went my Southern girl.

Do not mistake me in thinking that for a moment I was imagining Truth Dexter to be myself. It is my conviction that very few writers deliberately put themselves into their books, and those who do must like and admire themselves better than I have ever done. But all of us do use, and of necessity, the outer experiences of life through which we have passed and the localities with which we are most familiar.

I sent the finished manuscript to the good publishers who had issued my timid book of verse. It was accepted instantly!

When my husband and I received the business-looking "galleys"—then so exciting, later to become a penalty and a curse—I felt more important than I had ever done in all my life before. Together we corrected the long, blurred strips, laughing and joking like two children that play at being grown-up, only we were playing at my being a real "sure-enough" author.

Another phase of the game was choosing a *nom de plume*. My fancy leaned to the high-sounding title, "St. John Taliaferro," to be pronounced, of course, "Sinjeon Tolliver"; but my smiling Boston publishers coaxed me past this special candy-stall.

I then wrote out half-a-dozen names and sent them on, giving them the choice. "Sidney McCall" was the one which they preferred.

It had never entered my head to use my personal name to the novel, although I had done so with my book of verse, nor had the thought of a possible brilliant success ever been entertained by either one of us. To have a book instantly accepted and then madly rushed to press! This seemed sufficient glory.

But it was successful, and after a lapse of many years it still has a tiny sale.

This is the story of my first book of fiction.

GEORGE BARR McCUTCHEON

At the advanced age of twelve I produced my maiden effort, and I am sure a great many critics would have pronounced it my best and perhaps most enduring work of fiction, if it had ever got into print.

It was called "Panther Jim; or, the Scout's Revenge." With more than maidenly hardihood, I sent this, my maiden effort—to the editors of *St. Nicholas*. Fortunately I heeded the emphatic notice at the top of the editorial page and included postage for its return, a circumstance that afforded the editors of *The Youth's Companion* a subsequent and almost immediate opportunity to follow the example of the editors of *St. Nicholas*.

The editors of *Boys' and Girls' Weekly*—if I remember correctly—were next in line, and after them came *The Young Men of America*, and last of all, those prodigious manufacturers who turned out Beadle's Dime Novels by the thousands.

Perseverance was my watchword, promptness the slogan of the editors.

After Beadle's had returned "Panther Jim" I decided that something must be wrong with the story. So I sat me down and in due time—in and out of hours spent with misguided school teachers who labored under the delusion that they knew more than I did—produced my second masterpiece: "The Red Avenger"—truly a most noble bit of work wasted for the want of intelligence on the part of those who still so shamelessly mismanaged the affairs of *St. Nicholas* and *The Youth's Companion*.

For several years thereafter I was a regular contributor to both of these magazines, and I will say this for the editors, they were quite as regular as I.

Of course, I made it comparatively easy for them to be regular by enclosing stamps. And they were always polite, and always encouraging. I don't believe I could have persevered without their neatly printed words of encouragement. It seemed to me that they almost *begged* me to let them see my *next* story.

And then, somewhat abruptly, I concluded that my forte was play-writing.

So I wrote a few very engaging dramas for Miss Annie Pixley and Miss Maggie Mitchell.

Always I wrote for the ladies.

And they were *ladies*—perhaps of the old school. I do not recall a single instance in which they kept either my stamps or my play. To this day, I retain these maiden efforts at play-writing. They are safely locked away with other venerable maiden efforts and no man sees them unless I know that he is depressed and in dire need of something to stimulate the risibilities.

My most stupendous contribution to the drama—a five-act play for a well-known actress of the early eighties—was of sufficient importance to entice a two-page letter from the lady herself in which she informed me that there was really a great deal to my play.

In fact, she went so far as to say that there was more to it than any play she had ever seen.

The first act alone, she wrote, would run (if permitted) from eight o'clock in the evening until nearly six the next morning—and it would have to keep running at top speed in order to do it in that time. I am sure she did not mean to be sarcastic.

I gathered from this and other remarks the piece would have to be given exclusively in two-week stands if the public was to see the play from beginning to end, and as she was distinctly a one-night star even I could see justice in her lamentation. I was temporarily discouraged by these revelations.

However, I realized that time was short. It seemed to me that I was aging rapidly. Besides I was wasting a good

deal of precious time and energy at baseball and swimming.

Moreover, I had by this time, attained the ripe old age of fifteen. I began to think about getting married, and as every one knows getting married is something that calls for and deserves a whole lot of thinking about. For a little while my literary aspirations went into retirement.

They bobbed up again, however, as nippy as ever, a week or two after the object of my adoration announced her engagement to a middle-aged shoe-merchant. I would show her! As she was nearly the age of thirty at the time—or she may possibly have been slipping away from it—she no doubt felt that it was best to get on the safe side of matrimony while the getting was good. I think she lived happily ever afterward.

I was nineteen when my now far from maidenly or even boyish efforts were rewarded.

A magazine in Boston known as *The Waverly* accepted a story and printed it when I was twenty-one. The interim was spent in perfecting myself as a shortstop on the college nine and in laboriously memorizing things just before "exams."

You will observe that my prolonged maidenly efforts and I came of age at practically the same time. The story was called "My First Party." It was meant to be sprightly, for at that time I was trying to emulate George W. Peck, of "Peck's Bad Boy" fame, and M. Quad, of the "Limekiln Club." I read it over in an old scrap-book the other night, and I must say it is a great deal funnier than I thought.

I may be pardoned for calling attention to one bright and original speech of my hero: "Ten thousand devils, mother! Where is my clean handkerchief?" Here was a definite departure from "Gadzooks" and "Sdeath," and, if I do say it myself, it was a much more graceful thing to say to one's mother.

Immediately after the publication of this story I assumed the dignity of a real author. I sent a second effusion to *The Waverly* and this time I was bold enough to ask them if they could not *pay* something for it. But they were inclined

to adhere to a strictly literal conception of what a contribution ought to be; a contribution was a contribution, and so far as they were concerned that was all there was to it.

A period of ten years elapsed before I had another story in a magazine, but I had not labored in vain, I received fifteen dollars for the tale.

By this time, however, I felt I was too old to marry.

ANNIE NATHAN MEYER

If only one hadn't been so earnestly—and elegantly—enjoined to stick to facts! My first literary effort was entitled "*Alcott's Effect on His Friends*" and appeared in *The Critic* in 1888. I recall being asked why I did not frame the check, which was for the princely amount of three dollars, but I am glad to say that even then such a proceeding struck me as being both sentimental and amateurish—and above all I had a horror of being amateurish.

It was Jeannette Gilder—then editor of *The Critic*—who also accepted my first work of fiction for *Cassell's*, provided I would write a happier ending.

I compromised, refusing to show my heroine actually in the hero's arms, but adding a letter from him to her, dimly foreshadowing the return from "foreign parts" of a repentant lover abjectly suing for forgiveness.

How the critics scolded me! And, after all, my hero had been guilty of nothing worse than a sceptical attitude toward one woman being successful as both physician and wife. Even now—twenty-eight years later—it is not impossible to meet heroes of the same opinion still. Even with the faintly adumbrated happy ending, the novelette "*Helen Brett, M.D.*" was before its day.

Its subsidiary theme was the same handled later by Brioux in his "*Damaged Goods.*" So distinguished a critic as Thomas Wentworth Higginson gently chided that such stories should remain in the laboratory or on the shelves of the medical library. Some of the reviewers were certain that the book (published anonymously) was by a disgruntled old

maid.* With what glee did Miss Gilder finally announce that the author was a happy, married woman!

Those were the days of real sport!

If it were not that we must tell only of our very first published work, I should be tempted to reveal the terrible misadventure that befell me in having my first real novel accepted, "Robert Annys: Poor Priest."

The script had been with Macmillan & Co. for a few weeks when suddenly Mr. Brett, the President, was announced as calling on me at the little Inn where I was staying, a two and a half hour's trip from New York. In the wildest excitement I told the boy to show the visitor over to my cottage, and flew upstairs to tidy up (no, I don't use it, even on my nose!)

Then it came over me how absurd the whole thing was. If the firm were interested in my book, surely they might send for me to come to town, but never in the world, not even on a wonderful June day like that, would the busy President travel up to see me. I had a couple of brothers who loved to tease and who knew of my ambitions; of course, it was one of them coming up from town to surprise me. I was chagrined at having "bitten" at all.

So, hearing some one enter the little cottage, I leaned over the banisters and emitted a shrill, most derisive sound monosyllabically expressive of the attitude "You-thought-yourself-so-smart-didn't-you-but-you-can't-fool-me." It might be spelled something like A-i-n-g-h! Then, lest the delicate irony of this vocative be lost, there followed an entirely explicit "You thought you could fool me, didn't you. Come up, you old goose, you, Rob or Harry! Much Mr. Brett would come all the way up here to see me."

Imagine my horror when, after an embarrassed pause, a strange voice, the voice of a gentleman, cultivated and urbane

* A term applied in former days to women who, having passed the age of twenty-five (at which age today girls begin to think of marriage), were supposed to be no longer attractive enough to become the chosen bride of some man! It was distinctly a term of opprobrium, it being assumed that an unmarried woman connoted an unhappy woman, baffled in the sole aim and ambition of her life!

even under these trying circumstances, assured me that Mr. Brett really was there and had really thought it worth his while to come all the way up to see me!

But if I must be held literally to the very first publication, it was *Woman's Work in America* published by Henry Holt in 1891. Three years spent in corresponding with the seventeen women whom I engaged to write the chapters naturally yielded some amusing experiences.

Perhaps the most interesting was the letter from Mrs. Julia Ward Howe, regretting that because of her many literary engagements she was unable to accede to my request to write the Introduction. Like many a less distinguished woman, the pith of her letter lay in the postscript, "Are you by any chance related to my dear friend, Hetty Lazarus?" Replying that Hetty Lazarus was my aunt and her eminent daughter, Emma, my first cousin, Mrs. Howe's negative was swiftly changed to a most gracious affirmative.

One of the authors—a most impressive white-haired woman—after corresponding with me in my editorial capacity for two years, was much chagrined to find me only a snip of a girl, twenty-three years, weighing less than a hundred pounds.

Our interview took place during a session of the W. C. T. U., behind the huge stage of the Metropolitan Opera House. It was my first experience of behind the scenes—a disconcerting one at best, and I found the semi-darkness of that vast, confused space quite awe-inspiring. The lady peered about, looking for this Annie Nathan Meyer who had been announced, quite overlooking little me.

At last I summoned up courage to say that I was this Annie Nathan Meyer, only to be told by her quite sternly that I might be her daughter, but that I certainly could not under any possible stretch of the imagination be she. She had a peculiarly authoritative manner and I found myself on the point of going home to tell myself that I should have come in person and *not* sent my daughter.

There was another of the seventeen who had held up the publication for nearly a year, on one pretext or another. The

last was the illness of her mother. She made the most of what might legitimately have excused a delay of a few weeks. Finally, the manuscript arrived, with a letter, saying that "You will be delighted to know that at last my mother's death has permitted me to finish this."

I believe it was then that I said something to the effect that next time it would be seventeen *men!!*

ALICE DUER MILLER

The first eleven years of my life were full of maiden efforts. As soon as I could write and long, long before I could spell, I took in hand a pencil and four sheets of my mother's best note paper and began:

CHAPTER I

Lily and Jane lived in a nice house.

They had a garden.

After I had described what grew in the garden, what they had for breakfast (for in these days I was a realist) and the arrival of the governess for their daily lessons, I had a feeling that the narrative lacked interest and so I discarded it and began an entirely new one.

CHAPTER I

Madeleine and Lily lived in a nice house with their parents. Every morning they went to their garden.

Then this realist method passed away, and in the twinkling of an eye, I became, I can't remember how, a romanticist. It was under this inspiration that I produced my first complete work. It was written in a buff-colored account book. It was called "The Nun." It dealt with the escape of a nun from her convent.

Its treatment of the sex problem was franker than that of Casanova or "The Young Visitors."

About this time, when I was perhaps nine years old, I wrote a good deal of verse, somewhat under the influence of classic mythology. One of these efforts began:

“We stood by the bank of the blue tossing water
Diana’s white car rising over the sea—”

I sent this to *St. Nicholas*, which returned it with a very kind letter, saying that rejection did not imply lack of merit in the contribution. They seemed to be immensely grateful to me for having thought of them at all. The letter consoled me quite a little, and I do not remember feeling any failure of intimacy, although I suppose it must have been a printed letter.

The first thing of mine that was printed and paid for was, as far as I can remember, a fable of about a thousand words which I wrote during the mid-year examinations of my first year in college—a reaction from cramming. A well known writer who was by way of admiring my elder sister at the time said it was very remarkable and that *Scribner’s Magazine* would accept it on sight. *Scribner’s Magazine* felt differently, but the editor of *Harper’s Magazine* was more enlightened and not only accepted it, but sent me thirty dollars, and printed it—right out:

“A Fable for Youths,” by Alice Duer.

It was an ecstatic moment.

CLEVELAND MOFFETT

I am hesitating between two memories as to my maiden literary effort. This was probably a rather savage criticism, published in *The Yale News*, of President Hadley’s method of teaching German at Yale College where I was then a sophomore. That is a much more dignified choice than the other one, for Hadley (then a tutor) certainly did teach German in a queer way, and I suppose now regrets that he ever taught it at all, just as I regret any time spent in learning the miserable language.

It is possible, however, that my real maiden effort was made some months earlier, during the summer vacation in the peaceful hills of Northern New Jersey.

This was a poem entitled "The Song of the Bank Cashier" and was a most immoral production for a serious-minded minister's son. It was published (without payment) in *Texas Siftings* and afterwards reprinted in the *New York Sun*.

THE SONG OF THE BANK CASHIER

By Royal Camp (Camouflage name)

I was sitting in a hammock, not alone,
I was sitting near an object, not of stone.
On my cheeks, mid whispers low,
I could feel her sweet breath blow,
Fragrance richer far than Eau
De Cologne.

Quite entranced with the delicious situation,
Yielding madly to a wild intoxication,
Which inspired me to enfold
Something rather nice to hold
In one's arms, I made the old
Declaration.

She said "Yes" and we were married in the Fall,
We had love enough but lacked the wherewithal,
So we carried off a load
Of the dollars that were stowed
In the safe. Now our abode is—
Montreal.

This poem should be barred from all homes, high schools, Sunday schools and other centres of culture, for it teaches no lesson that deserves commendation. It contains no example of patriotism, flag waving, national or individual uplift, or anything of the kind. Its philosophy is distinctly of the Jesse James order, and if followed by all young men who happen to swing in hammocks with good looking maidens, would lead to distressing consequences.

I hope that the rest of your self-revealing authors will not be forced to admit that they began their careers in a similarly unworthy fashion.

ETHEL WATTS MUMFORD

It's hard for me to decide just which was my maiden effort. The first literary gems of mine to reach the eye of the public, were verses—very melancholy. I was about seventeen. I had written much before that—poems and “vignettes,” also melancholy. I have an antique volume of versified Sob and Passion, copied out in the fair round hand of a school girl Boswell, written when I was teetering between fourteen and fifteen, on the proverbial spot “where the brook and river meet”; but with no sort of reluctant feet, I'll warrant, except, perhaps, in the scanning of the aforesaid metrics—for only recently I re-read these early carollings with amazement and crimson blushings.

Just what a “flapper” is I shall forever be unable to elucidate. Certainly not after reading what seems to my maturer eyes those most unmaidenly efforts.

It was Oliver Herford who hounded me into literature, insisting that I “could if I would”—I believed him and did.

But my first real remunerative, straight-from-the-shoulder try at a short story won a prize in *The Black Cat* competition, and hung me promptly at the shrine of Art—a votive offering.

It was called “When Time Turned,” and it was a genuine brand-new idea. I have since shaken hands with it under many titles and fathered by many authors, and it doesn't recall its Mama—but its Mama gets a thrill every time. I treasured for years the typewritten page that officially notified me that I was to receive the accolade that knighted me a winner in the free-for-all tournament.

We authors owe a lot to *The Black Cat* competitions. They have put heart into many a novice. I was glad to see that recently they were at it again with a competition for novelettes in addition to their usual short story goal.

In the field of Drama, my maiden effort had the honor to be produced by that delightful artist, Annie Russell. It was a tragedy, of course. It would seem that I had to reach my voting majority before I could discover that the written word could be induced to suggest a smile. I wonder if the Tragic Muse always stalks beside the fledgling Pegasus. Perhaps the pages of this forthcoming "Book of Beginnings" will enlighten me.

MEREDITH NICHOLSON

My experiences as a writer have been sadly lacking in the element of adventure. My schooling ended in my fifteenth year. At about seventeen I began to write verse; I wrote a great deal of it. I had been mailing my jingles to all sorts of newspapers and magazines when one day I was highly edified by the receipt of a check for three dollars for a poem called "Grape Bloom" which I had sent to the New York *Mercury*.

My recollection of the *Mercury* is very indistinct, but I believe it printed fiction against a background of theatrical and sporting news. For about two years I bought the paper regularly but never saw my verses in print, so this hardly scores as a maiden effort.

At that time James Whitcomb Riley's poems were appearing every Sunday in the Indianapolis *Journal*. I was a stenographer in the law office of William and Lew Wallace at Indianapolis and was one of many fledgling bards whose work was tacked on to the end of Riley's column.

One Saturday Riley, whom I had been worshipping from afar but had never spoken to, appeared suddenly in the law office carrying a copy of the Cincinnati *Enquirer*. He pointed to a poem of his own and one of mine that were reproduced in adjoining columns, and said a friendly word about my work.

His invaluable friendship to the end of his days may not be described here, but in those years there was a sweetness in his characteristically shy manifestations of good will that

are indelibly associated with my memories of him. The first time I ever ate beefsteak and mushrooms he spread the banquet for me, the ostensible purpose being to invite my criticism (I was nineteen) of a new volume he was preparing for the press. My appearance in those days suggested my early departure hence by the tuberculosis route, and he may have thought to delay my passing by giving me at least one substantial feeding.

My rhyming in the law office didn't prevent a few attempts at story-writing.

The Chicago *Tribune* was offering every week a "prize" of five dollars for a short story of about a column's length. The first one I offered, called "The Tale of a Postage Stamp" earned the five. I immediately wrote several others which did not, however, take the prize. The short story didn't interest me particularly, and after a second had been printed in the Chicago *Current*, an ambitious literary journal that was braving the airs of Chicago just then, and a third in the McClure Syndicate, I didn't write, or even try writing, short stories until about six years ago.

I was in newspaper work for a dozen years, after I gave up the idea of being a lawyer; then I was in business for three years, but all the time I kept writing something. My first prose book was an historical essay, and I have tackled nearly everything except a play. After writing twenty books, inclusive of verse, essays and several kinds of fiction, I am still a good deal surprised every time I find that I have piled up enough manuscript to make a volume.

Youngsters sometimes ask me how they may become writers. The only way to write is to write. If the tyro finds that he has nothing to say or that precision and ease cannot be wedded on his scratch pad, then I should say that he has erred in thinking that the gods have summoned him to the altar of literature. But every young imagination that pines for flights in "the azure deeps of air" should be encouraged; for we shall always be ready to welcome in America a company of new writers who, in philosophy or fiction or poetry, have a message of hope and cheer for the care-weary children of men.

CHARLES G. NORRIS

I have wanted to write ever since I was eight years old. I kept a diary then, and indulged my imagination in literary flights which I fondly believed might some day be discovered by posterity, and included in the "Life and Letters." At thirteen, I commenced a novel entitled "In the Reign of the Grand Monarch" at which I worked after school hours. If it can be said that this effort ever had a beginning, it certainly had no end; for it went on and on, and if I remember correctly I was still adding to its pages five years later. As I never took time to read what I had written, I never became discouraged.

My brother, Frank, was eleven years older than I. As a beginner in literature himself, the family regarded him somewhat in the nature of a freak.

My early aspirations were therefore summarily discouraged. They said to me: "Come, come—enough of this; one 'genius' in the family is enough; we can't endure two; you'd better be thinking about watch-making."

But I escaped the fate of a jeweller and after college got a job in a publishing house. For the next ten years I was told what a remarkable and gifted writer my brother Frank was.

Then I married. And for the next six years after that, I was told what a remarkable and gifted writer my wife was. As I was well aware of both these facts, I confess their steady repetition began to bore me a trifle.

I faced the fate of being known the first half of my life as "Frank Norris' brother," and for the latter half, as "Kathleen Norris' Husband"—so at the age of thirty-four, I decided to write a novel myself.

Nobody was more surprised than I was myself when I succeeded, but the wonder of wonders came when I found a publisher. "The Amateur" went through several shops before it met with favor in any one, and it may be interesting to know, that when my next book came along, the publisher who had taken a chance on my first effort, would have naught of my second, which sold, when it eventually appeared, ten times as well.

KATHLEEN NORRIS

It was a short story, and I called it "What Happened to Alanna." I wrote it in 1902 when I was a bookkeeper in a hardware house in San Francisco and solaced my rather monotonous days with the thought that some day I would be a writer.

Previously I had written birthday poems and letters in rhyme and had selected the title of my first novel, which was to be called "The Bells of Saint Giles." My sister, who was afterward—many years afterward, to become the wife of William Rose Benét, and whose literary judgment was keen at sixteen, was then earning ten dollars a month teaching a kindergarten; she spent five of those ten dollars that month secretly in having my story copied, and sent it to several New York magazines. It then went into a trunk.

In April, 1906, the great earthquake cast together several literary beginners in our country home, and six of us wrote earthquake stories and mailed them east before the tragedy was forty-eight hours old. Five of these were taken, mine was returned. Disgusted, I took out my old story, and tried its luck again, with *The Black Cat*, I think. It then went into a trunk.

Then came three or four brief sketches for the San Francisco *Argonaut*, and two years as a reporter on the *Call*. Thrilled by the sight of my words in print, I got out "Alanna" again, but although the one editor to whom I sent it wrote me a charming letter, Alanna came back with the letter—back to the trunk.

In 1909 the trunk and Alanna and I went to New York and I was married; incidentally to a magazine man who believed that I could write.

Now comes the really interesting part of Alanna's career. The magazine man made a list of twenty-eight magazines which used fiction, beginning alphabetically with *The Atlantic*. He sent Alanna steadily down the line with a sickening cost to himself, for stamps and envelopes, but none

to my feelings, for he volunteered no information, and I avoided the subject as if it had been the pestilence.

Having completed her tour, Alanna returned in due rotation to *The Atlantic*, and this time found friendly earth upon which to plant her foot. The editor accepted the story, with a score of kindly words. I could write the letter now in the dark and put in every comma correctly.

The thunderbolt dazed us for days—we decided to admit to a few intimates the literary triumph, but to say nothing of the remarkable statement concerning a check for seventy-five dollars until it came. This last did not seem humanly possible.

The check came; it was hard, in the small and limited shops of mere New York, to think of anything we would not be able to buy—if we wanted to, with that first check! It remains a memory almost awful in its enormity—the opened door! The rejoicing, the excitement, the plans for that check bring tears to my eyes when I remember it now.

And between its first fair copy, in California, 1902, and its appearance in *The Atlantic* in September, 1910, not one word of my maiden effort had been altered.

WILLIAM HAMILTON OSBORNE

I am one of the most accidental of all accidental authors. I was born and brought up in the conservative city of Newark, New Jersey; was duly graduated by a public high school, and later by a law school in New York. No university training, no background of travel, no exciting youthful career—and, of course, no college paper. I settled down to practice law.

On a certain memorable day just as I was sliding out of my twenties into my thirties, the *Saturday Evening Post* published a serio-comic article entitled "The Fiction Market." I remember it well. It was decorated with an illustration showing a young author taking three silk-hatted editors out to lunch.

I showed the article to a near relative of mine—by marriage. She countered with an off-hand suggestion that I ought to try my hand at story-writing. For answer I shut myself up in a small room and wrote a story—just like that!

This first adventurous effort was entitled "The Bank Compounds a Felony." I first sent the story to *The Argosy*. Inside of a week Matthew White, Jr., the editor, accepted it and offered me twelve dollars for it.

One week after that he returned the manuscript, all marked up with his red-ink editing-pen, with a letter stating that he had read the story to a business man who had stopped him in the middle of the story and told him he had read it somewhere before. Mr. White said there was no charge of plagiarism, but I was a new writer and as somebody had recently tried to sell them several stolen stories, they couldn't take a chance.

I expostulated, but it did no good. The story I then sent to several other magazines, detailing, however, all the circumstances. Finally *The Nickel Magazine* (a five-center) bought the story.

No sooner was it published than a lady from Chicago wrote the editor, sending on a published story of her own, which contained the same peculiar twist at the end—the twist being the leading feature that made the stories. In general the stories were alike. In detail they were vastly different. She stated that her published story had been written from facts she knew personally. Her story had been stolen seven times already, and she opined that my performance constituted the eighth offense.

I wrote her, but received no answer; I assume she did not believe my protestations of innocence.

That was but the beginning. Later the editor of *The Nickel Magazine* sent me an English newspaper—a well-known paper published in London, containing *my* story word for word, except for names and figures, now entitled "How Burton Saved the Bank," signed by a name other than my own. Did this constitute the ninth lifting of the story? It looks like it.

But the end was not yet.

Shortly after the London publication of my story as above, the New York *Daily News* reprinted that story—just as it appeared in the London newspaper, with the new title, and the English author's name—in its Sunday supplement. The *News* probably bought the rights to the story from the English newspaper, but at any rate (since the rights to the original story belonged either to me or to *The Nickel Magazine*) the *News* could not acquire any better rights than the English paper had, which were nil. Hence, technically—however innocently—the *News* apparently lifted the story for the tenth time.

Note, also, that it was the Munsey Company, which in the first instance regretfully returned my story because they feared it was stolen; and it was the Munsey Company in the final show-down, that cheerfully published this very much bedeviled story, without question, in its New York *Daily News*. I have never admitted that I stole the story from any other version. But evidently the public cannot get too much of a good thing.

The singular thing about the whole affair is this—at least for me: if I had not written a second story before I got Mr. White's second letter, I would have then and there concluded that my story writing venture was a ghastly failure.

When I got enough money together to make a showing, I went over to New York to take out to lunch the silk-hatted editor of a magazine that had accepted my latest and most important story. I was duly introduced.

I discovered that the magazine had nine editors and that my story had been accepted by them all. Thereupon I left immediately, by the nearest exit.

During my first fiscal year, in my leisure hours, I wrote one hundred and forty short stories, of all lengths, and sold one hundred and six of them, at the lowest possible prices to all sorts of magazines and newspapers. And I have had more rejection slips per MSS. than any other author in the world.

I once sent a story to 125 magazines and newspapers and finally had it accepted by *Lippincott's Magazine*, which I had somehow overlooked in the beginning.

WILL PAYNE

I haven't the faintest recollection of the title of my first story, or what it was about. All I remember is the post-office.

At the right, as you entered, there was a glass show case, perhaps six feet long, containing a dozen or so silver watches, three or four gold, or near gold, ones, a tray of rings, a handful of chains and locket. Behind the show case and well up in the window to get the light there was a little work bench with a rack above it on which hung several repaired watches waiting for their owners. This comprised the establishment of the village jeweler.

All the ponderable objects on the left-hand side of the postoffice—if we except the proprietor, who weighed more than three hundred—might have been put in a couple of hand carts. But the imponderables gave it a vast importance. The proprietor was our state senator, and weighty conversation of a political nature was always going on there.

The postoffice proper was beyond all this, presenting to the in-comer's view a series of glass-faced letter-boxes, with a wicket at the left where stamps were sold, mail delivered, postal orders cashed. Mail came in from the East once a day. The wicket was shut then, and a considerable part of the able-bodied population gathered in the postoffice while the postmaster and his assistant distributed the mail with much deliberation. Very often the room was so crowded that one made way through it with difficulty.

The crowd was very embarrassing for me. The letter box that received my mail was over to the left, not far from the wicket, and about breast high—a painfully conspicuous location.

Ten days after I had mailed my story—which would be the shortest time for mail to reach the Atlantic seaboard

and return—I was on hand daily when the Eastern mail was distributed, always with a furtive eye on the letter box and an elaborate camouflage of assumed indifference as though I expected nothing but the most ordinary mail.

At length the day came when a long, bulky envelope slid into the letter box and my heart slid into my shoes.

Once in the box, that envelope seemed to me as conspicuous as a corpse with its throat cut.

I expected the people about me to break out in conversation about it. I hung about until the crowd at the delivery wicket dwindled away; then stole up and, having received my corpse from the postmaster's callous and calloused hand, slipped it into an inside pocket and hastened away.

But I had to be on hand when the mail was distributed because Mr. X sometimes got the mail from that box. He was facetious. The return card of *The Century Magazine*, or *McClure's*, or *Scribner's* on the corner of the envelope might have aroused a curiosity in his mind that would have been very embarrassing to me.

In private, I opened the envelope, read the printed or stereotyped note which regretted that my story was unavailable; and then mailed the story somewhere else.

I must have been at least a year mailing that story and getting it back.

If any magazine escaped it was simply because I didn't know of it. As I have no recollection of its final disposition, I conclude that a process of attrition must at length have worn it completely out.

Meanwhile I was trying to write other stories. One day I received a sample copy of a magazine whose name I have forgotten. It was unbound, printed on an inexpensive quality of paper and above the title appeared a vignette of Minerva. Not a great many years ago I described its appearance to a veteran editor whereupon he gave the title and told me who published it; but unfortunately I have forgotten again. Coming across a new magazine was quite a little godsend; and I sent on a story.

It was accepted. The editor explained, however, that they didn't pay money for fiction but, in view of the excellence of my contribution he would give me a year's subscription to the magazine.

It sounded very friendly and encouraging and in those days mere money was a very secondary consideration anyway. What I wanted was the glory of print. Thus heartened, I soon achieved another story and sent it on. I was a bit dashed on receiving from the editor another very friendly, encouraging letter, which was identical in everything except the date with his first one. But I was achieving print—and subscriptions.

As I recollect it, I had seven years due me when I discovered an editor who would pay real money for a story—to wit, four dollars.

HUGH PENDEXTER

My very first effort was written at the age of fourteen. Never having been out of New England, I made it a Western story.

I endeavored to imitate Bret Harte, but with the avowed purpose of making it snappier. Every other verb carried a gunshot wound or thrust a bowie knife. I sent it to *The Banner Weekly*, published by Beadle and Adams to accommodate the overflow of their dime-novel material. My friends pronounced it a humdinger, and I was positive of its acceptance.

And darned if they didn't write me for postage so they could send it back.

Some soul, even in a dime-novel office, must have visioned the expectancy of a youth receiving an envelope too small to contain a bulky script, but just the right size for holding a check. Some soul in that Deadwood Dick factory might have written his name above all the rest by digging down into his jeans and supplying the return postage, thereby saving me from the double jolt. But he didn't.

I've often wished I had saved that very first yarn. I know it was good, for all the kids so voted.

My first sale to any publication was to the old Portland, Maine, *Transcript*. I received three dollars and a half, and carried the check for display purposes until I had difficulty in cashing it. Later, I sent stories to Mr. Arthur G. Staples, then in charge of the Lewiston, Maine, *Journal's* Magazine Section. He bought several, and was the first to write me about my work and encourage me to try for bigger markets.

My first sale to a magazine was a short rural story, "In the Shadow of Daniel Webster." Mr. Trumbull White, then editor of *The Red Book*, sent me into the empyrean by offering twenty-five dollars. I shall always remember how that epochal letter raised me above all celestial heights and permitted me to confab with the gods. If my feet occasionally hit old earth I cleaned them on a cloud without abandoning my aloofness.

Ultimately, a closer perusal of the acceptance sobered me off and I descended to my waiting family. The editor did not unqualifiedly declare he would take the story. "We might be able to use it," were his words. I soared no more, nor slept of nights until the deal was cemented by the arrival of the check.

A few weeks later I sold another to Mr. White, at the same price. This time my exaltation lifted me only a few miles above the Chamber of Commerce building and I was back on earth after an absence of three days.

The third success with the same editor gave me the ennui of an old-timer explaining ancient truths to a fledgling. I remember that I opened the third pay envelope without swooning. Then I submitted two "Tiberius Smith" stories, which were rejected as being too extravagant.

Now I became a gnome and delved deeply in excavating a fitting tomb for my disappointment. I swore off writing for magazines. For two years I had bombarded them without much encouragement, and yet had kept my heart high.

But once having broken in with three sales the double rejecting relegated me and my hopes to the shelves of yesterday.

From the early winter of 1904 to late Fall I allowed my mind to remain fallow. I was content with my newspaper work and a steady sale of squibs and occasional signed stories to the New York Sunday magazine supplements. Then an agent wrote me, having just seen my three published yarns, and I sent him the two rejected ones. He promptly sold them to *Everybody's* and *Munsey's*. The tide was high again, and writing for the Sunday papers seemed coarse and sordid.

One truth that Mr. White taught me I always pass on to beginners. He refused a rural story because the hero made a great sacrifice unknown to any of the characters. Mr. White pointed out the necessity of some one character at least knowing the generous act—that it was not enough for the reader to know, unless one wished to make the reader mad. For some time I knew more than Mr. White, then re-wrote the ending along his suggestions, and made a sale.

CHANNING POLLOCK

Of my first writing, perhaps, the less said the better. It was a verse, produced at the age of "six, going on seven," that began:

"There has never shone a sunny sky without some fleecy speck,

There has never roared an ocean storm without some fearful wreck."

My family, including a journalist father whose lifetime had been devoted to proving that penury is the wages of the pen, refused to believe that such a poetic gem could have come from its midst. When that skeptical sire passed away, eight years later, he was still reading verse with a view to discovering my treasure trove. Thus early in my career did I stumble upon the charge of plagiarism.

At ten, while attending school in Prague, Austria, I was moved to begin my first play.

It was called "The Devil's Daughter," and is distinguished in my memory chiefly by reason of the fact that it was indited upon a single sheet of drawing paper, some six feet square. This circumstance was due to my faulty German, which, employed in a stationer's shop, was understood as a request for that kind of paper.

This play was brought to the attention of a local dramatic critic, whose verdict differed in no important respect from those my plays still elicit from gentlemen of his craft. Upon reading it, my father decided that I ought to make a good soldier, and that, in due time, I should be sent to West Point.

The paternal demise, while we were living in Central America, put an end to that ambitious plan. For the next four years I earned the family living by writing dramatic criticisms for the *Washington Post*, the *Washington Times*, and the *New York Dramatic Mirror*, and press matter for F. Ziegfeld, Jr., and William A. Brady.

Every penny I ever made came from writing except during three dreadful days when, to keep an insistent wolf from the door, I pushed a truck on the docks of the Joy Steamship Line. Though I had continued to cherish the ambition to be a dramatist—undiscouraged, then as now, by dramatic criticism—my first play to be produced was written wholly by accident.

Employed by Mr. Brady, I was press agent for Grace George in a piece called "Pretty Peggy." The last act was not quite satisfactory, and I had an idea for a better one, which I turned out one rainy Sunday in Chicago. Mr. Brady liked it sufficiently to accept it as part of my press work and to substitute it for the original. Also, to remember it later, when, on the ground that "you can't dramatize descriptions of office buildings at night," Augustus Thomas declined to accept Frank Norris' novel, "The Pit."

Mr. Brady said I might try, and I did. The play presented by Wilton Lackaye on my twenty-first birthday con-

tinued to be his vehicle four years, and earned in the neighborhood of half a million dollars. Of this sum I received one thousand dollars, in twenty weekly payments of fifty dollars each, with another thousand added, and paid in the same way, as the result of considerable moral suasion.

In spite of that business contretemps, I regard my real *métier* as salesmanship. In twenty-three years of writing from five to twenty-four hours a day, I have never written a word that hasn't been sold, and, to persons acquainted with the output, this must be *some* testimonial to my persistence and power of persuasion.

ERNEST POOLE

I took my first real plunge into writing in the Fall of 1902. At Princeton I had written two plays and a number of short stories. One came out in *The Nassau Lit.*

But that was in college. Now I was out in the wide, wide world—which the popular magazines were just beginning to “expose.” And with a large but vague idea of getting into the tenements and having a look at life down there, I went to live on the lower East Side; and after a few weeks' bewildered drifting about I found a story that took hold of my imagination.

Down around Newspaper Row were several hundred newsboys, some not over eight years old, who were known as the “All Nighters.” I spent the best part of a month of nights with the young ones. Breakfast with a six-year-old kid at 3 a. m. Coffee, doughnuts and apple pie. Chinatown was close at hand. The local undertaker soon became a friend of mine and took me into certain dives where more small urchins were employed by the white girls there as messenger boys.

At the end of a month I had my story.

I wrote it and gave it to Leroy Scott. Leroy read it hard a number of times, then clenched his jaws and sat down with me to a five-hour session—in which my news-

boy article was torn to shreds and put together. It had been formless. Now it had bones. I rewrote it two or three times and gave it to *The Century*. Mr. Gilder said he wished he could use it, "but we haven't any place for it now." Then I left it at *McClure's*—and they took it the next week.

I went home for Christmas—and found a wire from Mr. Gilder saying that *The Century* could use my article after all.

McClure's and *The Century*! Now I knew I was a great writer! Fiction for me! I wrote six short stories. All were rejected. Back to magazine articles. . . . My long apprenticeship had begun—and is still going on and will go on, I imagine, for the rest of my days.

MARY BRECHT PULVER

My maiden effort—or rather my maiden efforts—they were a whole rosebud garden of girls—had their inception at such a tender age that their genesis is lost in the mists of antiquity; but I think the initial spark of divine fire may have been supplied by the appearance in our library of those photographic supplements issued by *Harpers' Weekly* illustrating occasional gala dinners to literary celebrities.

As I gazed at each pictured concourse of brains and beauty, I remember resolving that there too would I one day shine. I would sit "about here," wearing a "low neck dress," with my arm gracefully drooping over the back of a chair "like this one," or with my hair frizzed handsomely and an intelligent smile, I would lean back "like that one."

Mindful of the matrimonial appanages present, I even selected a position for my husband. He should sit, say, like this "Mrs. Hope's Husband," with one hand carelessly on the table and his dress coat-tails nicely streaming out behind. I do not recall entertaining the least doubt as to

my ability either to become an author or to achieve a husband. Nor indeed—a greater feat—having won to the last—to persuade him lightly into the aforesaid coat-tail. . . .

Well, my childish confidence was not entirely misplaced. I am married unto a husband—and I have been invited to contribute to this book.

My first published effort was brought out by myself at the age of twelve in a magazine written, printed and bound by myself—a very satisfactory method for an author. It contained the forerunners of the present-day passionate editorial blurbs anent its contributor(s).

Barring this venture and a tale in a school paper concerning a wretched female named Desdemona Gray, kindly left unsmothered by the editor, I never knew the gentling hand of the compositor until after my marriage. Not that I wasn't patiently authoring all along the way. But I didn't particularly bother about getting published—just wrote for love of it.

There were a few things sent out through these years. Once, at sixteen, a story to *The Youth's Companion*—a pretty good story, too—which was duly receipted, stamped and adjudged by, I gather, some thirty or forty readers before it returned to its suffering author—without the olive twig.

Once, after some years, I wrote a frightful and Zolaesque thing called "Afternoon in the Almshouse"—I have never spent an afternoon in the Almshouse (yet)—which I foisted on *The American Magazine*. It was Mr. Albert Boyden who told me "it was too terrible to print" or words to that effect. I was quite proud of his letter—at first.

There were one or two things offered *The Century* and rejected—oh, so kindly—by Mr. Robert Underwood Johnson (never talk to me about the brusquerie or impatience of editors) but nothing "took" until on a day I wrote a little poetic study concerning my cat and my tea kettle, my kitchen—pure figments of the imagination. I read this to my family and they laughed. I had that sort of family. I laid the thing away, but one day, taking it out and reading

it, I sent it off to *The Independent*. Mr. Hamilton Holt accepted it and made me an author. More, I received nine dollars for it.

"All that for a little poem?" said I. "I wonder what I'd get for successful prose."

So I sat me down and wrote a love story—typed most horribly, too, shrouded like an Oriental bride in a mist of purple veiling—and sent it off to *Everybody's*. They gave me a hundred and fifty dollars—and the world lost a great poet.

Not only that. But with my wicked mind on the flesh-pots—a disgraceful complex, no matter what the necessity—I said, the story having required ten days for writing—said I: "If Mary can make one hundred and fifty dollars in ten days—in one month, which is three times ten days, she will make three times one hundred and fifty dollars or four hundred and fifty dollars, and in one year, which is twelve times one month, she will make twelve times four hundr—." I hurried to get some more paper and sat down to write. But—arithmetic was never my strong point.

NINA WILCOX PUTNAM

I early showed a tendency to realism and the invaluable, to an author, ability to pick the other fellow's brains for fiction purposes, and my first story was a one-thousand word effort entitled "Chickens," which my father rashly warranted to be original with me and which consequently won a first prize in a New York *Herald* competition, although as a matter of fact it was original with the old lady about whom it was written.

I was eleven years of age at the time and had never heard the word "plagiarism." Furthermore, I do not mean to imply I copied something she had written, but merely wrote exactly what she had done.

The story dealt with her habit of praying audibly and in the neighbors' presence for anything she happened to need and then when her prayer was finished, assuring her audience

that the Lord would provide. You may guess that under the circumstances, he usually did. The chickens from which my story took its title were an instance of the success of her method.

Her neighbors were about to move to the city and the old lady prayed in their presence that the Lord would send her some chickens, some nice white fat chickens that nobody else wanted. Half an hour later I heard her calling to my mother to come over and see the lovely chickens that the Lord had provided—miraculously! We crossed the way to the old lady's home and there admired three fat hens which the neighbors had sent over with their compliments. "See how the Lord provides!" said the old lady thankfully. Then she regarded the creatures thoughtfully a moment and exclaimed, "I think they might have sent a rooster!"

My next effort in a literary way did not come until I was a little more than sixteen years of age and it was then accomplished in spite of the uttermost opposition on the part of my family.

My mother, in common with most ladies of her generation, considered that there was something intrinsically disgraceful in a female of the race doing anything to earn a living, even though it were an honest one. As for young girls who showed any inclination toward the arts, their future was supposed to be an abysmal horror too fearful for gentle folk to contemplate.

In our set a girl must marry or be disgraced; and if she was a blue stocking or anything that faintly resembled one, her chance would be small indeed.

My whole early training was administered with a view of keeping me at the low intellectual level supposed to be desirable for wives of good standing. The fear that I might show some independence of thought or action was ever uppermost in my family's mind, and everything possible was done to discourage my writing. At one time, shortly after the production of "Chickens," they even went so far as to deprive me of carfare when they found out that I used to walk and spend the money for pencils and paper with which

to produce the forbidden masterpieces. The only wonder is that after all this struggle I did not turn out to be Lady Balzac or something.

Crude and undesirable as it was supposed to be for a gentlewoman to write or do anything else "queer" for a living, the making of beds and the washing of dishes in the privacy, or shall we say semi-privacy, of a refined or poor home, was o. k. But I did not like it, and becoming impatient for the freedom of matrimony which had not yet reached me at the age of 16, I actually managed to sneak enough time to myself in which to produce a masterpiece entitled "The Flat Above," which was inspired by listening to the sounds of footsteps in the apartment above ours. There were no actual characters in this story—only sounds, but it was a pretty good story just the same and I sent it to Street and Smith where the late Robert Rudd Whiting, one of the ablest editors that America has known (and not in my prejudiced opinion alone) saw sufficient merit in the story to buy it for *Smith's Magazine*.

How my stock went up with the family when the check for thirty-five dollars arrived! They weren't a particularly mercenary family at that, but even they were not above being impressed by the magic of my being able to procure, as they thought, something for nothing! I had pulled thirty-five perfectly good dollars out of thin air, or so it seemed to them and from that point on my "queer" proclivities were encouraged.

Ever since then writing has been my chief source of livelihood. The only really queer thing about my career is that so much striving should not have produced a higher literary standard. But I'd rather be a good bootblack than a rotten tenor!

WILLIAM MACLEOD RAINE

It was a Gadzooks yarn, and it began with a bucket of blood. Something like this, say:

“I lounged in front of the Warwick tavern, wiping the blood from my sword. Inside, they were rushing to and fro, some caring for the wounded man, some bawling for the surgeon, all wildly excited. They might have saved themselves the trouble. He would be dead before the sinking sun set. Trust Eustace Blount for that. I had not waited ten years to miss killing him when my chance came.”

The story rattled with swords. Eyes glittered balefully. Gauntlets and surtouts and plumed hats were frequent as telegraph poles on a railroad journey. Kings and Earls bulked large in it. In that one short story I wasted plot enough to outfit half a dozen books respectably. “The Luck of Eustace Blount” was a whale of a story. I admitted it to myself. A good many editors were going to be much distressed when they saw it in a magazine run by the other fellow. But that could not be helped. I had other stories in my system. They would have to wait for these.

So I wrote “The End” and sent Eustace adventuring. He swaggered into the office of the Munsey magazines and stayed there. The editor sent me a check for twenty-five dollars. The story was only 12,000 words.

I have never seen a piece of literature that had for me the personal significance of that yarn when I actually read it on the printed page. I went over it a dozen times and always discovered unexpected merits. Little did Denver suspect that the sallow youth walking down Sixteenth Street was a Great Author. A sorry little scrub of an unknown I might be, but I hugged the knowledge that when the public read the current issue of *The Argosy* things were going to be different.

My landlady had looked on me with a speculative eye. She was not quite sure whether I was a bad investment or

not. That Munsey check and subsequent ones cheered her immensely.

The Imperative Urge that drove me to magazine writing was connected with my need to eat. It came about this way. The day after the *Maine* was blown up I presented myself for enlistment in the First Washington Volunteers at Seattle. A doctor discovered that my boilers were rickety. I migrated to Denver, having read that sunshine pours down on that blessed city 397 days a year. After a few weeks on the old *Republican*, reporting sports, my health blew up. I was ordered to hold down a porch.

Since I was stony broke it did no harm to play the hunch that I was probably one of the world's greatest writers. I lapped up sunshine and wore out lead pencils. Presently, that masterpiece, "The Luck of Eustace Blount," emerged from my inner consciousness.

Matthew White, Jr. (May his shadow never grow less!) bought "The Luck" on its first trip out. He did more. He asked for another and paid for that. Then he suggested I try a novelette, which later he regretfully refused, not on account of lack of merit in the story, but—etc.

That first story must be the best I have ever written. At least, I have never got so many thrills out of any others. There has been a steady declension in this line. Of late years I have read some of my own pages without any glow of champagne in the blood.

Alas, youth's a stuff will not endure.

OPIE READ

Tall, gaunt, aspiring and broke, I had just been spawned by a shady-nook college over whose portals was chiseled the name "Neophogen." It was a learned institution and so worshiped the extreme of antiquity that it died under an operation for Neoplatonism.

A professor had told me that the one thing in which American journalism stood in need was the dignity of learned expression. He did not object to news: perhaps

news was essential, viewed narrowly; but in even a news item, there should be the dignity of scholarship. "A classic grace, if you understand me," said the professor. "And you have essayed, or rather I should say that you shall by predilection essay, to write as a profession. I have heard you express appreciation of the quick gestures of literature but I do not believe that you are yet ripe enough in scholarship to estimate properly the statutes of permanent thought. But go forth and conquer."

This sounds like a travesty but it isn't. It is more nearly true than many a thing set off with an affidavit. A fancy must be æsthetic, but fact may be ridiculous.

Off I trudged, searching for the sensitive nerves of the journalistic world, having been told that this was the way to find the ultimate muscle of literature.

My equipment was brief, a carpet-bag containing two shirts, one when out on a clothes line having been chewed by a calf; but as this involved a part of the garment supposed to be screened from public view, it was not a matter of acute distress.

Ah, but there was within that receptacle something more important than a shirt—an unabridged dictionary—prize for a competitive essay whose mummied title I have happily forgotten. Not much of an armament for fight—two shirts and a dictionary, but out of the carpet-bag arose the sling of spirit and with it I would pebble all opposition.

First encounter—a newspaper office, Nashville, Tennessee. Opposite in the tilt, an oldish fellow who had worked under Greeley on the New York *Tribune*. He was not unkind. His blue eyes were rather sympathetic and his voice was as soft as the tones of a dentist in his soothing preface. But he hurt me. He said that a row of collegiate sheepskins as long as the Texas frontier wouldn't impress him.

"What we want is not learning, but inspired ignorance," he said.

And as my ignorance was not inspired, but heavy and low of jaw, I left him.

Now began search for work in hard and foot-sore earnest. I had learned to set type; in truth as a compositor I had worked my way through college on a magazine which in no degree peppery bore the name of *Attic Salt*. It was edited by an active scholar who could leap upward and pop his heels together twice in the air. As a speller he could not have held his own with Webster, but he played a fiddle with a free and improvising hand.

Times were hard and work was slack. From town to town I tramped, now beyond the hope that the newspapers wanted essays and ignorant allusions to Greek philosophy. I was looking for type to edge up. One dark and rainy evening I reached a small town in western Tennessee. Having walked all day I was hungry and tired. But in the drizzle of the street I found no one to invite me to supper or to sit down. The place was as dark as a war zone when bombs are expected to drop.

Feeling along a wall I found a doorway—a flight of stairs.

Up I crept with my dictionary, my shirts having been stolen from a bush whereon they had been spread to dry.

Now—a long narrow corridor, a door yielding to a slight push; and in I went, breathing the fuzzy nap of the musty dark.

I struck a match and looked about—a small court-room with a bar of justice and a big box of saw-dust to accommodate the tobacco-spitting lawyers. There was more than half of a candle on a desk and I lighted it—sheets of paper scattered about and I gathered them—there having arisen a brighter flame than candle light—the impulse to scribble something not of the ancients but of my own experience.

Then, forgetting my weariness, I sat down to work, wrote a sketch entitled “A Cross Tie Pilgrimage.”

When it had been completed I read the penciled lines, astonished at truth and at the ease with which it had been told. And how delightful! A bed was here provided, a bench; and upon it I stretched out and slept till day. From a kind soul standing fat in his doorway I borrowed a stamp,

an envelope, a pen; and on his counter (elbowing his cabbages out of the way), I addressed my "inspiration" to the New York *Sunday Mercury*, having requested that if the sketch should find favor please send check to Bolivar, Tennessee.

I expected to reach that town within three weeks, not on account of its remoteness but from the fact that I should be forced to change trains many times before reaching there. Out I rode on a freight about ten miles, and then upon urgent invitation proceeded to walk. But I laughed tenderly, a great hope having buoyed my heart. Now I had something to look forward to; and about the dome of the court-house at Bolivar I reached forward and hung a wreath. And then in the night in a corn-crib I woke out of a sweating dream. I had reached Bolivar and the Mayor himself had come up maliciously to return to me my manuscript.

But the next night there came a vision of joy—five dollars from *The Mercury*; and the village band was serenading me when I woke—to hear the lowing of the cows in the barnyard.

At last I came within sight of the town. Was that the sun glinting the court-house dome? No, my wreath! But as I drew nearer the wreath began to fade, the red of the rose yellowing with the hue of the dandelion, the larkspur ashen. Without a tremor I could have contemplated a business transaction, its success or failure, and could with some degree of courage have gone into a fight; but now I was tremulous as I stood against a telegraph pole to let the mail train pass—to throw off, perhaps, a bag containing my hopeful offering. Now in startling clearness I could see my rude sketch, sprawled on soiled paper. Back to me came the words, once so throbbing with life, now so meaningless and still.

On I walked, and would have passed the town but was too tired to go further. Every one looked at me suspiciously as I scuttered along the street. Every one knew that my vanity had been rebuked. A lout laughed as he passed me,

and I turned and gazed after him, believing it a Christian act were I to heave a brick at him. I came upon a cripple dragging himself along, and I mused that his essay had been returned and had crushed him.

Out of a doorway girls came giggling over letters—the postoffice—and I sat down on a box to wait for the town to get its mail. The shadows stretched themselves out to rest, birds began to tweet their vespers in a locust tree. It was time to receive my doom. In I went. The place was deserted. No—a man peeped at me through his battlement. Then I braved myself to inquire if there were a letter for me. He grinned at me. He was a humorous cuss.

“Letter for you? How do I know? What’s your name, if you happened to bring one along with you?”

“Oh, I beg your pardon. Yes, I think I have one about me somewhere.”

I told him; he grinned, and began to look over a handful of letters, sickening me with his whistling deliberation.

“That it?” And he threw off one, my name on it; and in my clutch it thrilled me with its flimsiness—too thin for my sketch. Open I tore it and there flashed a check for six dollars. I turned, after taking hold of something to keep my balance, and handed him the check and the few words that accompanied it.

“You can see that this is all right. I wish you’d cash it for me.”

He looked at the check, whistling. “Well, I guess you need it. All right—endorse it and I’ll give you the money.”

I thought that he meant that I should go out and get endorsements; and sadly I confessed that not knowing any one in town I could not do it.

He roared, looking about as if he hoped that there might be some one near to enjoy the joke with him. Can’t endorse it because you don’t know any one! I wouldn’t have believed it. But you can write your name on the back of the check, can’t you?”

“Oh, yes. Is that what you call endorsing? I’ll write my name all over it.”

"Once is enough . . . Here you are," and he gave me six silver dollars. Nearby was a restaurant, a tumble-down place, but now a palace. In I went, dropping my dictionary on the floor. Up came a darkey and asked for my order, looking at me suspiciously.

"Yas, sah, dat's er fine order. But when a pusson dat ain't er citizen o' de country make er order lak dat, we mus' inquire erbout de wharwif."

Hereupon I slammed down my silver and he ducked into servility. Just as he had spread the meal—and it was bountiful—I heard some one walking toward me and, looking about, I encountered the smile of a man whom I had never seen before, but I knew that he was a tramp printer. His short beard was red, and about his scarlet lips played a hungry flame. He did not speak. He dropped his wallet, his stick across it, and drawing up a chair sat down at my table, proceeding vigorously to help himself. After a time I ordered more, and he continued to eat in silence. Then he leaned back, full to the gills, and drew a long breath. He looked at me and spoke for the first time: "Now where do we go?" . . .

I have often thought of that scene, as vivid now as in its original pose, many years ago. How resonant are his words, and how illustrative. . . . After pleasure, after sorrow, after life—"Where do we go now?"

LOWELL OTUS REESE

It's more or less a shot in the dark, but I *think* the first thing of mine that ever appeared in print was published in my cousin's paper, *The Fontanelle (Iowa) Observer*. It was brow stuff. Heavy, like a noodle. It was so mournful that, although it has been years and years, I've never been able to forget it. Here's the first verse:

“Now, while Nature seems all dying,
 While the winter winds are sighing
 And the voice of the dead summer from the drifted
 leaves is crying,
 O'er the grave where Hope lies sleeping,
 Fall the tears my heart is weeping;
 For I know that soon the snow above my own brow
 will be flying.”

I was only twelve years old, but you see I had already doped it out that this life was going to be a pretty tough bird.

You know, when he is twelve or thirteen years old and feels the first twinge of senility creep over him, the shock of the realization turns him cold. He had thought life a fairly cheery proposition up to that time; and then, all of a sudden, he sees it for what it is—a cold gluey gob of nothing in particular, made up of one darned thing after another. The contemplation makes him sick, like he'd made a mistake and swallowed a sour jellyfish. So first thing he does is to break out in a cold sweat of graveyard literature.

But I must have cheered up a trifle when I wrote the second verse.

“Murmuring mortal, do you know
 That 'neath all this winter's snow
 Germs of Spring are lying waiting for the Summer's
 trump to blow?
 Thus it may be we are waiting
 While some awful Plan is fating
 Mortal lives and mortal destinies—with hardship for
 the snow.”

Didn't I say it was brow stuff? A twelve-year-old Hoo-sier kid reeling off that kind of dope and never straining a differential or getting a hot bearing. Who says a kid loves kid books! Pooh pooh! Yes, I said pooh pooh! Mother Goose for Grandpa, Oliver Optic for mature minds and take Daddy to the circus for a good time; but if you want

to make a hit with the fair-browed giant who has just crawled out of his cradle with the grim determination to take this poor fish of a world by the neck and shake it till its teeth rattles, give him something to chew on.

Yes, sir, believe one who knows all about it; they can't come across too hot for him. Thanatopsis will barely get over. Maybe, later on, when he is a careworn man of seventeen or so he'll develop his normal taste and consider Nick Carter one of The Six Best Sellers; but while he's in pin feathers he wants his literature to have a kick in it.

I'm pretty sure the above verses were my maiden effort. However, it lingers vaguely in my recollection of those days that a five-act Tragedy struggled for the honor. A few lines of that great work float back to me through the years.

. . . Age.

Steals o'er us like a frost. We know not when
Nor whence it came. 'Twas not—it is. Old Time
Touches us all unknown, his deadly stroke
Softened to a caress; till in surprise
One day we pause and, looking upward, say
"Lo, I am old!"

Thenceforth throughout our lives
There runs a vein of sadness. . . .

See? Still feeling my poor, doddering twelve-year-old frame bowing nearer and nearer the earth! Age was the motif, though I think there was also a plot

Yes—I get it dimly. There was an ambitious bird named Cæsar or something, and he got a lot of the boys together and used the strong arm on a guy named Pompey. Maybe it wasn't Cæsar, either, but that doesn't matter. I forget just what the fuss was about, too; but, anyway, I've a hazy idea that Pompey had promised the bootlegging graft to this other fellow, and then after election he slipped a hot card to Cæsar's rival who ran a blind-pig down by the waterfront. And when the blow-off came this Pompey effect wound up at the bottom of the ruction with a big flat foot

in his face and his family waited dinner for him for two hours and a half—.

But that was all dead wood, of course. For me the main show was the Old Age grief. I twangled that string every time I got half a chance. All through the five acts.

But say: Isn't it human nature? We begin to yell long before trouble starts our way. We think we're the first to see it, too. Old stuff—but we've been doing it ever since Adam had his first tooth pulled.

People have been getting old for quite a spell, now. But the minute a kid begins to realize that some day he'll have false teeth and a hairy mole on his nose he takes the momentous news and breaks it to an astounded world. For even the mildest precocity manifests itself in melancholy blank verse and a passionate denunciation of Age.

By all of which I mean to convey the suggestion that, judging from my Maiden Effort, if your kid has literary instincts, and you want to make him happy, present him with a tombstone with green mold on it and he'll make Bill Shakespeare curl up like a woolly worm.

ALICE HEGAN RICE

In my maiden effort in literature I claim the distinction of having broken the record in the use of prose if not poetic license. In the first paragraph I managed to achieve six statements that were not true. It ran as follows:

“To begin with I am a typical old maid, living alone in a large city, possessing two cozy rooms, a cat and some books, and living a happy, contented life; but occasionally I indulge in dreams and wonderings as to what would have been my fate had I chosen the more hazardous path of matrimony.”

Now, at the time I wrote those lines I was a school girl, one of a large family, living in a small city, possessing no cat, and giving no thought whatever to “the hazardous path

of matrimony." Having just read Ik Marvel's "Reveries of a Bachelor"—I can still recall the thrill of those lines "Love is a flame; how a flame brightens a man's habitation!"—I decided to write as a school theme a companion piece to it and call it "Reveries of a Spinster."

The little commendation of my English teacher on the margin of my composition was the match that set fire to the heap of literary aspirations that had been accumulating since I was old enough to hold a pencil.

Without taking any one into my confidence I sent my composition, unsigned, to the *Louisville Courier-Journal*. Even at this late date it is a matter of gratification to me that I launched my own small craft without asking for a friendly push from Marse Henry, in whose home I was a frequent visitor.

For several days I waited anxiously to see what would happen. As usual, it was the unexpected. "The Reveries of a Spinster" was not only printed as a serious contribution but was immediately followed by an indignant protest from "A Married Woman." That was the start of a spirited controversy that raged for some weeks between the married and the unmarried who voiced their opinions from various parts of the state. All of which provided daily amusement for a group of school girls who read the articles at recess, and shrieked with glee over the caustic references to the "cynical old maid" who had begun the discussion.

Having found it thus easy "to start something" with my pen, I continued my efforts from time to time with varying success, but never ventured further than the comic papers until ten years later when I plucked up courage to send my first long story to a publisher. The result was the publication of "Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch," and the same year that found me definitely started on my career as an author found me also a happy adventurer on what I had once regarded as "the hazardous path of matrimony."

CALE YOUNG RICE

Maiden effort? Well, if I must, I'll confess that in adolescence I was a larva who had not fed on verse and who had no idea of being metamorphosed into a poet. From this athletic, love-enamored stage of existence, I changed into a student of Philosophy, under William James, and meant only to spin a wholly new and convincing theory of the Universe. The metamorphosis continued, however, irresistibly, despite the dark shapes of certain dire protest and finally the result was achieved—a result as strange as if a tadpole had turned into a nightingale.

Yet the outcome must have been more manifest to others, for I was accused of writing poetry long before I did. As the Universe indubitably needed solving, this was somewhat to my disgust. But my Cambridge friends only shook their heads, and when a chair of English Literature was offered me in a small Southern college, and at the same time another offer came to teach Philosophy, they saw my finish.

Don't fancy however I had never written a verse up to this time.

Once, lured by a lesson in Physiology, I committed some lines on the "hirsute integument" a bald-headed man lacks; and again I wrote on the subject of "prayer," with an intention far from humorous. Both these effusions, it is needless to say, have gone the way to destruction, together with some six hundred more written since but found unworthy of print. Posterity therefore, has something to be grateful for.

Accepting the English chair I spoke of meant, naturally, a surrender to Poetry, and that siren has led me by the nose ever since. She would not so much as permit me a mild flirtation with Prose for many long years, but continuously presented me with offspring—among the earlier of which, it is interesting to remember, were certain free verse experiments such as young poets of today delight in putting forth. My nightmares are yet haunted by the memory of the inadequacy of that first volume of brain-children. But I committed infanticide as rigorously as I could,

Of success, the first taste came when Henry Tyrrell, editing *Leslie's*, accepted a group of my lyrics at one time. I immediately decided that Parnassus was a mole-hill—only to come to the later conclusion that no poet ever really reaches its peak by the magazine route. Never, however, shall I cease to thrill at the thought of Henry Tyrrell's letter sent in accepting those poems. It told me that Henry James and William Dean Howells were also contributors to a number of the magazine which would contain one of the poems, but that my lines were, to him, worth all the rest of the periodical put together! Blessed are such dews, to the young, from the editorial gods!

But there; the jade poetry is calling me, as you see, and I must go.

P. S. She didn't really want me after all. It was mere curiosity to know what I was doing with Prose.

LAURA E. RICHARDS

By far the easiest thing for an author to do, in response to a request for a maiden effort is to send one of those Daisy Ashfordings of which every author has been guilty.

My own concerned a "Marion Gray, a lovely girl of thirteen," the youngest daughter of "a celebrated nobleman in great favor with the king." She was stolen by the gypsies. After five years, when the new king was sitting on his throne condemning a band of gypsies, one young girl stood with downcast eyes before him and, when sentenced, raised her dark flashing eyes upon the king.

Then—"a piercing shriek is heard, the crown and sceptre roll down the steps of the throne, and Marion Gray is clasped in her father's arms!"

As for my first published work:

I made my literary *début* in *St. Nicholas* in the goodly company of John Ames Mitchell, founder and for so many years proprietor and editor of *Life*. "Johnny" Mitchell was

at that time a young architect working in the same office with my husband, that of Messrs. War and Van Brunt. The two were warm friends and "Johnny" Mitchell was often at our home. I was then (the early '70's) a young mother making nonsense songs for my babies and crooning them to more or less tuneful airs which were born with the songs.

I think it was my husband who first suggested that Johnny should illustrate some of my jingles. He took a parcel of them home and returned a week later, bringing the pictures of "The Shark" "Little John Bottlejohn," etc., which delighted a generation of *St. Nicholas* boys and girls. We sent our joint productions to kind Mrs. Mary Mapes Dodge, then editor-in-chief of *St. Nicholas*, and were most warmly received.

Under the wing of the children's saint, therefore, we both made our bow. For quite a number of years we continued to work more or less together, I sending him a rhyme now and then, he occasionally despatching a picture for me to furnish words. Increasing years and varying cares broke up the delightful partnership of work, but the three of us were always warm friends.

This should, I suppose, be called my maiden effort. I might add a word about one of my early prose efforts, "Captain January," a little story which, after being rejected by every publisher of repute in this country and by several in England, at last fell into the friendly hands of Mr. Dana Estes and had some little success.

GRACE S. RICHMOND

"**T**he Flowing Shoestring" was the title of my first marketable story. The probable reason why my first editor (by that time very much Americanized) warmed to it was that I really had written it from life—out of the jeers of my family. I had been trying to write for a long time, but until it occurred to me to introduce into a tale certain earmarks of "the genius"—as she is still called in derision by her friends—I didn't succeed.

I *was* a genius—of sorts. Ten minutes before it was time to leave the house for the theatre I could pin the trimming on a newly conceived hat and sally confidently forth. If now and again a feminine acquaintance inquired: "What is that hanging down over your left ear?" (those were days of snugness in hat construction, and something dangling over the left ear denoted loose ends, not fashion) I merely tucked whatever was detached up under the brim and went serenely on. My right shoestring *did* come untied oftener than other people's—they said it was another sign of brain power.

In brief, when I was at last inspired to make my heroine just such another irresponsible creature as myself, sowing gloves and handkerchiefs right and left, catching her heel in ripping skirt hems, saying and doing the wrong thing everywhere, yet somehow being able to laugh herself back into other people's good graces—then, and not till then, did the editor look my way.

But, alas!—as I hadn't understood what it was that had caught his eye, in the very next tale I returned to reliance on my own lively imagination rather than on anything I had ever seen, heard or done, and therefore immediately missed fire again. It took me a good while to discover that one really must know a little something about that of which one attempts to write.

The principal reason, however, why my memory of that maiden effort is still vivid, lies in the humiliation of the experience which followed immediately upon the arrival of the princely payment for the "Shoestring." With that twenty-five dollars descended upon me that peculiar madness which seems to be enclosed in the envelope with first checks.

The magnificent dark oak "bedroom suite" in the window of the village furniture shop was marked "\$80.00." One could barely buy its noble expanse of mirror for that sum now. I had long coveted it for my guest-room when the fateful check came in. The purchase of the splendid "suite" became not merely a possibility, it appeared to me

in the light of a duty. I was a wage-earner like my husband, who practised medicine. Why should I not put my shoulder to the wheel and help him with necessary expenses—like the purchase of that furniture?

I flew downtown and ordered it sent home at once—on the installment basis. I moved the cheap and varnishy old set out of the guest-room, and when my husband came home I led him up to see the new one, awaiting his delight. I remember my heart beat very irregularly indeed as his eye fell upon it. He was ever a man of an unsympathetic practicality in such matters.

“What was the matter with the old one?” he demanded.

“Oh, it was so cheap looking,” I explained. “This—why this is a wonder!”

“How much did it cost?”

“I paid for it with my story,” I told him proudly. “That is—I shall finish paying for it when I have written one or two more.”

He was a good deal impressed with my having sold the story, but somehow that didn't seem to cover the ground with him.

“You should have waited till you had all the money in hand,” he said sternly.

“Well, but someone else would have bought the set,” I countered wildly.

He shook his head. “My motto has always been: ‘Don't buy a thing till you can pay for it.’” Then he walked away.

I viewed myself in the noble mirror again and again, but a change seemed to have fallen upon it. It now looked strangely overgrown, as if it would take a good many checks to pay for it. The inevitable tragedy followed. As the “bedroom suite” loomed larger and larger in its impressiveness, in inverse ratio my ability to earn checks shrank to the vanishing point. My editor refused to be interested in me again. Other editors seemed to take their cue from him. I couldn't earn a copper cent.

The first installment came due. My husband paid it—not hesitating to state again, and in still sterner tones, what his motto had always been. He continued to furnish me with the motto from time to time, as he paid further installments. Even when the last one was completed he didn't entirely forget to recall the motto to my mind.

By the time our children were old enough to enjoy the recital they learned from both father and mother that the guest-room furniture had been bought with the first money that mother had earned all by herself. Cheerful grins across the table, over their heads, bore witness to the altered feelings with which we had come to view the transaction.

In all the years which have followed the historic "bed-room suite" has stood in our guest-room. Other house furnishings have come and gone, but not the massive mirror. Less heartless editors than that first one have viewed their shaven or unshaven faces in its glorious expanse, little guessing how significant or how fitting was its service to them. But somehow my husband, though a generous man (when he forgets to mention his lifelong motto), has never cared for the guest-room furniture. Nor I for the memory of my maiden effort.

HENRY MILNER RIDEOUT

My memories of this kind of thing are vague. When not less than thirteen years old and not more than seventeen, I seem to have written a narrative of something that had somehow to do with the burning of a house or stable, by the light of which two strange characters fought in the snow.

It was truth, not fiction: a real fire, and a real fight. One of the combatants lived in a place called Hog Alley. The rest is forgotten, except the two instigating friends who thought this product rather droll—and the bare wintry look of it all in print.

AMELIE RIVES

The first literary effort that I ever sent for publication was the sonnet called "Surrender." I wrote it when I was fifteen and sent it to the editor of a distinguished magazine. It was returned to me with the usual slip; I pinned it to my note book and wrote under it: "Some day this editor will accept this sonnet."

The more important literary effort in the way of making my name known was a short story called "A Brother to Dragon." I was in the habit of writing many short stories, but I never sent them round to publishers or magazines. The history of this particular story is as follows: when I had finished it I said to my mother: "I think this is rather a good story, at least it is not commonplace."

My mother agreed with me, took it downstairs with her to read it in manuscript and left it among her music on the piano.

One day a young friend of mine, Mr. William Sigourney Otis from Boston, looking over the music came on "A Brother to Dragon," still in manuscript. He read it and when I came down he remarked to me: "By Jove, Amelie! D'you know I think this a stunning story."

I was pleased and showed it. He said: "What are you going to do with it?" I said I dreaded receiving the usual editorial slip such as I had received five years ago. He replied: "I am not going to take it to an editor."

I said: "What then, a publisher?"

He said: "Neither. There's an awfully nice chap in the Houghton Mifflin bookshop and I shall simply hand it to him."

I said: "Very well if you want to do it, only don't come back and cry on my shoulder if they don't do anything with it."

He never wept on my shoulder, and this is what happened to my manuscript. The "nice chap" in Messrs. Houghton Mifflin bookshop took it, read it and took it a little further

to Mr. Aldrich, then the Editor of *The Atlantic Monthly*.

Mr. Aldrich accepted it as soon as he had read it and sent for Mr. Otis from whom I had extracted a promise not to reveal my name under any circumstance whatever. Mr. Aldrich, when he could not learn my name, said: "What has happened to this young man? Is he in jail? If he is, tell him I'll bail him out and pay his way to Boston, for I must see him."

However, I remained obstinate and the story appeared anonymously in the next number of *The Atlantic Monthly* as the opening article.

Two months later, encouraged by my unexpected success, I sent again to the editor of the distinguished magazine the sonnet that he had refused five years before, also revealing my name as the author of "A Brother to Dragon." It was accepted promptly with a charming note from the same editor whose name was not Oliver but who asked for more.

ARTHUR SOMERS ROCHE

Almost nineteen years ago, a slim youth, then in law school, brushed a lock of hair back from his tall forehead. Those were the days when our hero had hair. He had lots of other things, too—among them an amazing belief in his own genius. Although a student of law, he had not yet definitely decided to follow the legal career. Against all rules of suspense, we will inform you at once that he followed the legal career only briefly. And that you may not draw too hasty conclusions, let us further state that he didn't follow an illegal career, either. Anyway, it wasn't illegal then, and you could buy it almost anywhere, provided you were eighty yards from a church or a public school and lived in a community of civilization and culture and the hour was between six a. m. and one a. m.

He yawned, our hero did. A member of the family rebuked him. "Going to bed?" he was then asked.

"Nope. Guess I'll write a short story."

Thus, debonairly, did our hero, *àtât* nineteen, leap into his real career. For fools rush in . . .

He knew nothing of the grinning fates who leered down upon him. Had he foreseen what lay ahead perhaps he might have got a job as a shipping clerk in a woollen house and by this time have become senior partner and have owned a bunch of stock in a local bank. Yet, knowing our hero, I am inclined to believe that had he known to the last cheerless detail what he must endure before he achieved any sort of literary recognition he still would have traveled the same path; because he wanted to write and believed that by inheritance he was destined to write.

He wrote the short story that night. It was about two thousand words long and pretty bad. Next day, he sent it to one of the New York magazines. It came back. But with it came a note from the editor who was good enough to say that he had found the little yarn very amusing.

And so our hero sent it to another magazine. But his allowance of pocket-money was small; stamps cost money. A couple more magazines, and the short story was shoved in the darkest drawer of an old desk. . . .

Four years elapse. . . . Our hero, now old enough to vote, and realizing that he will never become a judge unless he first builds up a reputation as a lawyer, and realizing that he will never gain that reputation until he has a lot of clients, and realizing that he'll never have a lot of clients until he has a big reputation, and hating the whole thing, anyway, and having lost all of eighteen's vague awe of judges—one of them having decided a case against him—quits the legal profession—leaves it flat, desolate and forlorn, and takes a midnight train to New York.

He arrives on Sunday and, of course, like every Boston youth who visits New York, spends the first evening calling on a girl in Yonkers. Next day he called on Peter Dunne, editor of *The American Magazine*, and destined to eternal fame as the author of "Mr. Dooley."

Mr. Dunne gave our hero a letter to William Lewis, then and now editor of the *Morning Telegraph*.

Mr. Lewis read the letter. It was a kindly letter, inviting Colonel Lewis to employ our hero, or throw him out a window, or anything else that might please the Colonel's fancy.

"What can you do?" asked the Colonel.

"Write funny stuff," replied our hero.

Colonel Lewis hurled his gauntlet to the floor. "Let's see some," he said.

Our hero, bending over, gracefully retrieved the gauntlet. "Read this," he challenged.

"This" was the battered manuscript of his nineteenth year. The Colonel read it swiftly; he grunted briefly.

"I'll take this," he announced.

"How much do I get for it?" our hero inquired.

"Six dollars," said Colonel Bill.

Thus was our hero made a real author, one who received pay for his creations, one who trod the same byways as Poe, Hawthorne, O. Henry, Shakespeare

We hope that Colonel Lewis, among his doubtless few errors in a long and honorable career, does not number the fact that he started our hero on his literary way.

HENRY C. ROWLAND

Savants of physiology tell us that the first evidences of organic life are contractility and irritability. I should say that the next forward step lay in the desire for expression.

I passed this second examination at the age of eight. There were quite a number of us kids on our block, 38th Street, New York, and my father, who was fortunately for himself a child lover, liked to invent games that might help develop our natural gifts. He instructed us in a game which we called "Community," and supplied us with a toy coinage, of which as I remember about ten units had the actual value of a cent. This money was equally distributed amongst the members of the community, each of which then entered on some trade or profession.

We had our stores and offices and studies. One of the boys immediately opened a bank. Another started a transportation service up and down the block, which gave satisfaction to the commuters. The locomotive was a wooden velocipede which hauled coaches of express wagons and other rolling stock. The passengers of this pioneer venture were always willing to lend a hand. My elder brother, a natural craftsman, opened his shop for the manufacture of toy boats and puzzles, usually maps, sawn on a scroll-saw and he turned pretty little brass cannon on his lathe. My sisters went into the candy business.

For my part, having learned to write legibly at the age of eight, there seemed to be no reason for not taking advantage of the accomplishment by entering the open game of literature and writing a novel.

My dual motive at that time was precisely what it is today, the desire for expression and that of worldly gain.

Wherefore I got to work, precisely as I do now, except that at that time I was possessed of greater enthusiasm and ambition and made the whole book, text, illustrations, binding and everything. This work was in two volumes, about three by five inches in size and must have contained at least three hundred words. I believe the Book of Genesis which tells of the Creation of the World is about this length. Many modern readers would find it a magnificent fault in modern fiction. And mine was a success. It was a best seller. In fact it was the only one in our community until the next. I had no confrères or contemporaries contributing original work to the Community's circulating library. It was a Golden Age.

I may say in passing that it is a curious historic fact that in later years the majority of us boys followed our first choice of professions with more or less success.

My maiden effort was published under the *nom de plume* of "M. Socrates," and it had a succinct preface which read: "This is a good book and very intrusting. It can be read by every member of the Household." (A high endeavor which I have since tried to be true to.) It opened with a

short verse from "The Inchcape Rock," then plunged immediately into the story, as follows:

"It was midnight on the broad Atalantic, and the gallant ship Tigeress lay still. There was no sound save the trickel of the waves as they dashed against the hull of the vessel."

I am told that my style remains unchanged. Let me quote a few passages from the subject matter, of which I have often since made use, though never I fear with the vivid pungency of the original yarn:

The sun had just risen when the captain came on deck and began eagerly scanning the hurizon. "Joe," said he to the mate, "I think there is one in sight. Hand me the teluscope."

Joe handed him the spuy-glass, and the Captain had taken but a single glance when he began to grind his teeth and cried in a tone of satusfaction: "I know him, the villyun! "Quick, Joe," said he, "bring up the powder and shot and get the cannions in order!"

The mate hastened to obey because not long before his Girl had been taken prisuner on a sea fight and he felt shure she must be aboard the Red Rover at this very minute . . ."

The first volume of this novel carries the narrative to a tense moment where the frigate and pirate are about to engage, and the reader is then informed that it will set him back another "one-half dime" to learn the sequel of the affair. Nobody can deny the orthodoxy of this policy. It came into vogue with the first story teller and subsequent ones have carried on, "As to a fountain from other stars, filling their golden urns with light."

This novel was subscribed for by the "Community" circulating library, and there being only the original long-hand MSS. the author depended for his royalties on the amount allowed from subscriptions to the privilege of drawing out and reading his book. It proved popular, particu-

larly with the adults of the household. But then it was a very man-sized story.

As this maiden effort was never printed, it may not fill the requirements of that of which I am requested a description. There followed a hiatus of about twenty years in which all literary effort was suspended so far as any attempt at fiction is concerned. During this time there was a certain amount of technical matter from my pen printed, medical and surgical and a little descriptive travel and about boat handling. Then, after the publication of several articles on warfare in the Philippines, Mr. S. S. McClure suggested that I try my hand at fiction. The result was a series of stories published first in his magazine and later in book form under the title of "Sea Scamps."

These stories were scarcely up to the novel of twenty years before, being more sketchy and lacking in the same robust love interest centered in the Captain and his Girl, who was "taken prisoner on the Sea Fight."

I have since written a good many "one half dime" novels—less price perhaps as the reader has got a good deal more for his nickel's worth, there having been other stories. But at least I have tried to stick conscientiously and at the cost of sensational publicity to that first preface which recommended the book as wholesome literary pap for all the household.

ERNEST THOMPSON SETON

I note that I am to tell about my maiden effort. This is not easy, for the fact is, I made a number of maiden efforts, and the puzzle is, which one is wanted?

The wild animal story I wrote in 1880, and couldn't get any one to publish, so that it is still in my desk (for which I am now thankful as I look over it)?

Or the 1882 attempt, which lies with No. 1?

Or the No. 3, which having elements of history in it, got into a very local newspaper, which generously made no charge for insertion?

Or the 1884 attempt, which is reposing mustily with its maiden yea, virgin sisters, Nos. 1 and 2?

Or the No. 5 attempt, on "Housebuilding," which, through influence, I got into a local Canadian magazine, and having a very heavy pull through a political friend, I extorted \$5.00 for the article of 2,000 words?

Or perhaps you really mean my early 1886 effort which was a chapter of my wild life, and appeared in *Forest and Stream* for June 6th of that year. Or possibly my later attempt that same year (called "The Song of the Prairie Lark") which appeared in the old *American Magazine*, and killed it dead,—at least there was no later issue of said magazine.

Now, personally, if I must make a choice of this bunch of maiden efforts, I should select "The Drummer on Snowshoes," which appear in *St. Nicholas* in 1887. For this, with five illustrations, they paid me the incredible sum of fifty dollars—cash (not promises)—enough to keep me on the prairies for a year.

I showed this story to Joe Collins, the Canadian writer. He had editorial instinct, and said, briefly: "You can sell as many of this kind as you choose to write and as fast as you choose to write them"; and he proved right, for this was later re-written and re-published as "Redruff" in my most successful book of animal stories.

As I look back over these many attempts I realize that the misguided editors rejected all my efforts to be "so very literary" and accepted those in which I tried to tell in simple language a story that came from my heart.

ANNA McCLURE SHOLL

The great event happened while I was at boarding school. *St. Nicholas Magazine* had offered prizes for the best short stories written by youngsters whose age, if I remember rightly, was not to exceed fifteen years. The first prize was forty dollars, the second twenty. When

I read this thrilling announcement it seemed as if the great crisis of my existence had arrived.

I had never been what was known in those far days as "a perfect little lady." When I wasn't climbing trees or mooning in some sunny corner, I was sprawled on the floor reading Dickens or old-bound volumes of *Harpers'*. My cherished ambition to write did not greatly interest my practical parents. My mother indeed was chiefly aware of the fact that I hated sewing and other feminine accomplishments and that in no way did I resemble Madgie Lukens, the charming little daughter of a neighbor constantly held before me as an example and rebuke.

The *St. Nicholas* prize competition seemed not only a chance to even up matters but to convince the family that an author didn't have to know how to cook to write about cooking. If I won a prize I might permanently divert my mother's mind from my feminine deficiencies. Fired with this ambition, I forthwith wrote a story called "Helen's Prize Dinner" and despatched it to *St. Nicholas* office with many hopes and fears.

Weeks passed. The manuscript of a schoolmate, submitted in the same competition, had come back. Not mine. One never-to-be-forgotten day the postman brought me a letter bearing the imprint of the *St. Nicholas Magazine*.

Thrilling news!

I had won the second prize of twenty dollars.

The entire school went down to buy a copy of the magazine which contained the announcement. We read it walking five abreast on the narrow sidewalk of New Brunswick's main street. I tried not to look proud, and to treat my friends with the easy familiarity of one overtaken by greatness, but still human.

Later, the story was published in *St. Nicholas* and the family succumbed!

LINCOLN STEFFENS

My first was a poem.
 Naturally.
 I was young, very young.

But I had a conscience even then, and it was that which sang. And it sang a hymn of regret for the years I had wasted; the lost, lost years of my precious life. The refrain, which is all I can recall of it now—the cry which sobbed through it all was:

“If only I could live once more.”

And that was all right. And the editor of *The Record Union* of Sacramento, California—he accepted my poem; he printed it with my name.

So it was a success, my maiden effort. I was proud.

But I was puzzled, too; for some years afterward I could not see why the editor printed after my name the irrelevant words: “Aged eleven.”

JULIAN STREET

Ridley College, the boarding school which I attended, is at St. Catharine's, Ontario, and is an English type of school. In my day boys committing small offenses were punished by detention. In detention we were given long sums in pounds, shillings and pence. These were known as “tots.”

For offenses regarded as too serious to be punished by “tots” we were strapped. A master would give the offender, say, “six on each”—six blows on the palm of each hand, administered with a short piece of rubber-sheathed belting. Twelve on each was the severest strapping I ever heard of. Four to six on each was the average. If a boy had sufficient notice in advance of strapping, he could prepare for it, mitigating the pain by having his palms coated with resin.

Offenses considered very grave were punished by caning. Canings were administered only by the principal, Rev. Dr.

Miller, the boy being taken by the collar and flogged on the back with a flexible rod. Obviously, the protection in this case was extra clothing.

My maiden effort, published in the school paper, *Acta Ridleiana*, about Easter, 1895, just before my sixteenth birthday, dealt with the more vigorous forms of punishment. I have eliminated many of the over-emphatic italics and capitals with which the original verses were pock-marked, but have refrained from performing obviously necessary ortho-pædic operations.

FOILED AGAIN

"Say, Mr. Miller wants you!"

Some one howled in at my door,
 And I knew he'd seen me out of bounds
 Upon the day before,
 So I donned three suits of underwear
 (I tried to don one more
 But I couldn't so I hung it
 On a hook behind the door).

Then I got three college jerseys
 And a heavy flannel shirt.
 (I'd like to know how through such layers
 A caning still can hurt.)
 To be on the safe side of it,
 On went a few things more;
 Then I sadly sallied down
 And knocked on the office door.

"Come in!" a dreaded voice replied,
 So, with a guileless face,
 The door I pushed and stepped into
 The awe-inspiring place.
 Then commenced the little lecture
 Ere the whacks began to fall—
 Oh, how I wished I had skipped off
 And not gone there at all!

But there was still one comfort
That even then I had—
With all my clothes a caning
Could not be very bad.
But just guess what my feelings were
When I got the commands,
After all my work of padding,
To take it on the *hands!*

It is perhaps worth adding that this episode was not founded upon fact, but was pure fiction; and that though Dr. Miller overlooked several occasions upon which undoubtedly he should have strapped or caned me, I have forgiven the omissions and prize him as a friend.

Though I had never been inside a newspaper office or known a newspaper man, I had from boyhood a fixed idea that newspaper work was the work for me. I was, however, unable to get a start on a Chicago paper, and worked for several months in my father's railroad office. Then I found a job in an advertising agency. I liked advertising work because it had to do with printer's ink, but I was young and green and soon lost my position. At that juncture a school friend whose father was publisher of the *New York Mail and Express* (now the *Evening Mail*), wrote me that if I would come to New York they would try me out as a reporter.

I went.

Coincidence played such a curious part in the success of my first assignment that I am almost ashamed to tell about it. It sounds like the conventional made-up magazine story of the cub reporter. In order to offset, as far as possible, the aroma of fiction I shall mention names.

I arrived in New York two or three weeks before the first of the international yacht races in which Sir Thomas Lipton tried to "lift" the America's cup. The *Shamrock I* was then in drydock in one of the shipyards of the Erie Basin, Brooklyn.

I had no sooner reported to the city editor, Mr. William Evans, than he dispatched me to Erie Basin to find out what I could about the *Shamrock I*.

I was a stranger in New York and had some difficulty in reaching the shipyard. When I got there I discovered that it was surrounded by a high brick wall, and that guards were stationed at the gates to keep people out. Some of the reporters who were hanging about had taken a rowboat and made a tour of the outside of the shipyard, but had been able to see nothing of the *Shamrock*.

Now, it so happened that just before I left Chicago I had met on the street Mr. Walter C. Hatley, a friend of my father's, and had told him that I was going to New York, and why. Thereupon Mr. Hatley took from his pocket a visiting card, and wrote on it an introduction to Sir Thomas Lipton, who was a friend of his.

"The yacht races will be on pretty soon," he said. "This card may be of some use to you."

When I went to the Erie Basin I had the card in my pocket.

I tried to get one of the guards to take it in, but he said Sir Thomas was not there. I then asked to see the head of the shipyard company, and on the strength of the card to Sir Thomas was admitted to his office. I told him that I was a reporter on a first assignment and that my future depended largely on the success or failure of my effort to see the racing yacht in drydock.

He replied that he was not in position to authorize me to visit the yacht, but that he would send my card of introduction to Mr. Barrie, Sir Thomas's racing representative, who was then in the yard, and that if Mr. Barrie wished to let me in, it would be all right.

To make a long story short, Mr. Barrie saw me and let me see the *Shamrock*. I knew nothing about yachts, but to have seen the *Shamrock* in drydock, when no other reporter could do so, was something of an achievement.

When I left the yard I telephoned the office and asked Mr. Evans what to do. He told me to stay where I was

and give them the story by telephone. Then he placed at the other end of the wire a man named Clarke Firestone who, as I learned later, was the ablest reporter on the paper. I did not know how to tell my story, but Firestone cross-examined me and got it. He wrote a column or more and it appeared that afternoon on the first page.

That was the first piece of writing for which I received pay. It was written by someone else.

ARTHUR STRINGER

My maiden effort as an author, that is to say my initial contribution to public and permanent literature, was both a maiden one and an initial one in rather a double-edged sense of the word. For when a certain new Pickle Factory was being erected in the outskirts of a certain suburb where I once dug pirate caves and ate inadequately fricasseed crawfish and had my being, I happened to be prematurely but profoundly and incommunicably in love.

So, to ease that ache which had rather bewilderingly transferred itself from a more or less settled abode in the digestive organs to an entirely new position in the organ of circulation, I proceeded, quite unobserved by the workmen, to inscribe on an exposed portion of their still impressionable cement-work, a statement which impressed me, at the time, as being as monumental as it was axiomatic.

Within a large and deeply auriculated heart I wrote on that still receptive concrete

A. S. lovs C. W.

And in doing so I achieved a consciousness, not only of the permanence of the written word, but also of the indecipherable mutability of the feminine mind. For the lady in question, for reasons best known to herself and her sex, took umbrage at this public advertisement of a relationship so essentially personal, and a prompt but unmistakable coolness grew up between us.

We no longer surreptitiously perused a common copy of "The Swiss Family Robinson" and we no longer shared

the same raspberry all-day sucker. That quite indignant Mistress Cherry Woods (and since Cherry has long since changed her name and is now the mother of five equally devastating and equally charming daughters, I think I am free to disclose to the world what always seemed to me an especially alluring and colorful appellative) gave me the mitten, in fact, and took up with one Benny Baxter, who chanced to be the possessor of a new brand of bicycle (then somewhat contemptuously known as "a safety") which could be ridden with equal ease by a member of either sex.

But year after year that essentially autobiographical acknowledgment and those initials so touchingly enclosed in the same heart served to bring home to me both the irony of human destiny and the solemnity of ever committing to enduring form the acknowledgment of an emotion which cannot identify itself as permanent.

I have written many things, since then, and have seen Time commit them to the four winds of oblivion. But so long as the Pickle Factory stands I shall not be altogether unknown to the world.

I even begin to suspect, in looking back through the mists of the half-remembered, that it was the charming Cherry who first headed me for the Pierian Spring. To reconstruct a blighted life, after the withdrawal of her favor, I turned to poetry. My first poem of any dimensions, I distinctly recall, was "A History of the World Down to the Trojan War." I had no suspicion at the time, of course, that I was anticipating so agile and accomplished a rival as Wells, just as I had no suspicion that I was to get spanked for writing a large portion of this effort on the bathroom walls.

It must have been quite a long poem, for even those portions which I duly committed to paper provided sufficient material, later on, for the manufacture of several box-kites. It was written in blank verse, for the simple reason that rhymes, in those days, were a good deal of a bother to me. The spelling was more or less phonetic, imagistic, as it were, yet producing the effect desired (if you get what I mean).

But of that first masterpiece, alas, only one line remains. That one residuary line, I recall, was from the passage where Hector and Achilles are eating muskmelons and green corn together after an artillery duel somewhere in the vaguely denominated suburbs of Troy, and the former rather inhospitably informs the latter that he intends to make him, in the words of the poem,

“Hop-sotch out of Troy, as tame as a toad.”

The homely directness, the by no means unartful alliteration, the obvious knowledge of animal life, all crowded into one line, have apparently made that line imperishable to me.

As for my first published poem, I try as much as I can not to remember it. I do this, not only because it was such a bad poem, but because of certain painful memories associated with it. There was a full page of it, and I sold it (at least I thought I sold it) to *The Canadian Magazine*. It was sent in, and accepted, and duly appeared in type to set the world on fire. I was even honored with twelve editorial copies of the magazine. Then I waited, patiently impatient for that remuneration which tradition led me to expect from the publication involved. My heart skipped a beat or two, I remember, when I finally opened the long-expected letter. And it was a bill for three dollars, for twelve copies of *The Canadian Magazine*.

When I had recovered from this blow I sent a shorter poem to *The Week*, then edited by Goldwin Smith. Dr. Smith, in some way, actually accepted the poem and actually started me on a long and varied career of crime by writing me a note of encouragement.

In the matter of prose I moved so imperceptibly from the *caldarium* of college journalism and the *tepidarium* of the editorial chair into the *frigidarium* of actual authorship that it is now hard to say just when and where and how the fatal first plunge came about. But on that occasion when a certain Fifty-sixth Street dentist was filling one of my molars with silver-amalgam and at the same time essayed to fill my mind with the dolorous tale of how a band of wire-tappers had

recently mulcted him of much of his gold, Fate, at the same time that the electric drill was opening up a new cavity in a bicuspid, was opening up a new field in literary activity. I went home and wrote "The Wire Tappers" and for ten long years became associated, in the unimaginative eyes of the New York editor, with that world of nocturnal adventures and marshmallow criminals which I knew so very little about.

I did my best, of course, to bridge over this sad hiatus in my earlier education. And that brings back still another painful episode in the beginnings of my mottled career as an author.

When Harvey O'Higgins and I first started "free-lancing" in our ruinous old studio on the top floor of a ruinous old dwelling at 146 Fifth Avenue, we nursed the fond delusion that our Avenue address was going to be a great help to us in our efforts. We even cut out tobacco and theatres for a month, to possess ourselves of adequately embossed stationery—stationery which announced to the world that we were domiciled and doing business on that one and only avenue of the affluent. But it did not divulge the fact that our attic-studio was unheated and that we consequently slumbered with our top-floor doors swung wide, to the end that ascending heat from less straitened tenants below might seep into our meagre quarters. Nor did it betray the fact that we slept on ex-army-cots, garnered at a knock-down price from a Sixth Avenue dealer in all such antiquities, and that in winter we padded out an attenuated mattress by many layers of the *Sunday Sun* laboriously mucilaged into bed-length sheets.

But about this time, because of my criminal activities on paper and my interest in a beneficent but purely imaginary bank-robber who gave every promise of paying our rent for the winter, I felt the need of knowing a trifle more about safes and their construction.

Now, I had never owned a safe, for very obvious reasons; and the only ones I had ever observed, for equally obvious reasons, were shut and locked at the time of my approach.

So from a business directory I ascertained the name of the biggest firm of safe-makers in the city, or, to be more exact, the name of the firm of the biggest safe-makers in the city. Then I took a sheet of our resplendently embossed Fifth Avenue note paper, and thereon typed a request for literature and data regarding their heavier makes of vaults, safes, time-lock strong-boxes, etc.

About ten o'clock the next morning, when O'Higgins was still reposing on his army-cot, reading with one hand, so to speak, the morning *World* while with the other he stirred the matutinal oatmeal bubbling on our portable gas-stove beside him, and while I still slumbered peacefully on (for in those days we found it simplified both our finances and our housekeeping to permit breakfast to merge imperceptibly into luncheon) we had a visitor.

He was a large-framed gentleman in a frock coat and a silk hat, slightly out of breath from having climbed so many stairs. He was, in fact, the biggest salesman from the city's biggest safe-makers. I opened a sleepy eye just in time to see that he carried my carefully typed letter in his hand and a look of incredulous exasperation on his face, for O'Higgins had neglected his bubbling oatmeal long enough to explain, with a jerk of his thumb, that the Rodolpho our visitor was in search of most unmistakably lay before him. And that frock-coated salesman gave one long look at me, one long and even more contemptuous look about our humble but honest attic, and turned on his heel. He stalked out, without a word. And while O'Higgins eyed me, and I eyed O'Higgins, I remember, the oatmeal porridge got burned. *Sic itur ad astra!*

IDA M. TARBELL

“**T***egnaby*,” (teng'nabi).

“*Shot*.” Referring to the shot which killed Charles XII. “The shot” is the common reference in Swedish books to Charles XII's death.

“*Having but one name*.” The use of fixed surnames did not extend much farther back than the latter part

of the tenth century. They first came into use in France, and by the Normans were introduced into England. Prior to the Reformation surnames were less fixed than now. Younger sons particularly, dropped their patronymic, and often, instead, adopted the name of their estate or place of residence, as did Tégner.

"*Apples of Sodom*," Therenot says: "There are apple trees on the side of the Dead Sea which bear lovely fruit, but within are full of ashes."

"Like to the apples on the Dead Sea's shore,
All ashes to the taste."—*Byron*.

"*Loup-garou*," (lou-ga-rou). The French for bugbear.

The above brilliant and absorbing paragraphs are fragments from my maiden effort. There were more of them—something like 250 in all.

It was not an effort born of a desire to express myself. I had never had that torment.

On the contrary, I naturally detested all direct self-expression, regarding it as an invasion of my privacy. My maiden effort was not then born of a desire to say something—nor of need. It was merely an attempt to do a good turn to a perplexed editor who had appealed to me to help him out of a difficulty.

This editor's periodical was known as *The Chautauquan*. Its pages were mainly given to printing the reading selected by a board of directors for the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle.

At that time these reading courses had tens of thousands of followers scattered throughout the country. The majority of them lived in remote places—on farms, in the mountains, in small villages. They had access to few, and many of them to no books of reference.

The result was that the editor of the magazine and the directors of the courses were besieged with letters, asking how to pronounce this word, what was the meaning of that,

what more could they tell one about this person, where was this town? The burden of reply became so heavy that it was suggested that *The Chautauquan* published in connection with each month's reading a series of notes, clearing up, as far as possible, the points of difficulty that were making so much trouble. "And," said the directors, "let it be done at once."

The editor could not put his hand on a suitable person. I was in the vicinity and known generally for always having my head in a book. And so I was asked as a friendly service to prepare the notes for one month. I did them—pronunciations, translations, definitions, explanations of allusions—biographical, historical, mythological, scientific, and so forth. A deadly *corvée*!

I was too unsophisticated in the ways of the publishing world to realize that what the editor really had in mind was trying me out; having a hope, though as I learned afterward little expectation, that I would "do" for his new department. My first effort convinced him that I would. He published my pickings and asked me to go on.

Much as I detested the work, the sight of the things in type produced a queer sense of compulsion and responsibility—I had begun something and I must finish it, and so I took on the department—or the department took me on.

I soon found other things engulfing me—all the various things that an "organ" must do to serve and boost its constituency. It was not long until I found myself with a make-up on hand. I began to write editorial articles. That was the end of my one and only great work passion and the beginning not of a new passion but of many new tasks.

You see, I had never had the writer's call, had always had a natural repugnance to revealing myself. To say what I felt had offended me—it was mine, let others keep their hands off! Yet I had my dream—it was to be a biologist.

The one and only reason that I desired to be a biologist was that I might spend my days in the world that a binocular microscope reveals.

Never had anything so thrilled me as chasing the protean amoeba. Never have I so gloated over any achievement as discovering under the microscope the delicate *foraminifera* and mounting them on slides.

Somewhere in the junk that I have collected in my lifetime I have still a few dozen little brown slides bearing these tiny shells, marked and dated—laughable remnants of a great passion.

My maiden effort shattered that dream. It led me into fields about which hitherto I had had no curiosity, and of which I had only the vague awareness the college gives. It put into my hands tools which I had never been taught to use, and in which I had only the most perfunctory interest.

If it had not been for my maiden effort, who knows, I might today be living with my binocular in the vivid, active world of the protozoa!

BOOTH TARKINGTON

Something had made me melancholy—I think it was discipline. I was thirteen, and retired to the perpetual shade on the north side of the house, and there, among the lilies of the valley, I brooded until my gloom became cadenced and I found myself to be a poet. Returning to the library I wrote as follows:

THE TREES

When the soul knows but sorrow,
And the birth of tomorrow
 Will bring but the death of today,
Turns the soul to the trees
Moving cool in the breeze
 With shadows of leaves at play.

Turns the soul to the trees
 As they move in the breeze,
 Finds rest but no gladness,
 Finds rest and still sadness,
 Finds rest where the breezes sigh—
 But the trees answer not Passion's cry.

Turns the soul to the trees,
 Moving cool in the breeze,
 With shadows of leaves at play;
 But can never find gladness,
 Forever just the still sadness,
 For the soul in its sorrow, the birth of tomorrow
 Is only the death of today.

I think this must have been written on a hard Saturday, with no great anticipation that Sunday would offer anything lively.

And further, upon telegraphic compulsion may I—must I?—add——

All right then; I'll tell the facts.

My first "published writing" (as you insist, when you *know* my *writing* never has been published, and isn't it a mercy?) was a *Lit. Prize Story*; Princeton, 1892. The prize was \$15.00.

First published writing for which I was paid by a publisher or editor was a "joke" in *Life*, in 1894. Gibson illustrated this "joke," though I sent them the illustration for it, myself.

When they returned mine I thought matters over and decided they must have liked his illustration better than they did mine; but as they sent me \$1.50 for the "joke" I concluded not to make a disturbance.

In 1895 they did print a picture I drew; they sent me \$13.00 for it, and only \$7.00 for the accompanying text; so I decided that I was an illustrator after all.

These financial details are important because they were the determining causes of my whole career as an illustrator. This career lasted without any further remuneration until 1898, when Mr. McClure, recovering from influenza, and depressed, decided that his magazine couldn't be much injured by printing my first novel as a serial.

Then I again became a writer.

That's all, Mr. Editor! And *can* you have such nonsense printed even in the best cause?

MARAVENE THOMPSON

It was when I was in my early 'teens that I wrote it. Forty thousand words! Right off the reel! Hot! In two months! Just like that! I had an idea that an author always wrote in the dead hours of the night. So, shivering in bed with a blanket over my shoulders, I scribbled during the night—my first tale, for nights and nights.

Which is why, perhaps, I sent it to the *Saturday Night*, sheets and sheets of legal paper, written in lead pencil, never revised, read to no one—(For why should I? Wasn't I an authoress?) I sold it, the forty thousand words for two hundred dollars—(I thought it a good price, and it *was*, I assure you!)

There were two murders, a suicide, and the heroine was all but "ruined" three times. I remember none of the dialogue, nothing of how the three would-be-betrayers looked. The hero was tall and dark, with a brow like a "marble god." (I remember that. I loved it so. I never thought of the discomfort of my poor dear heroine against that cold marble.)

I recall one of the hero's speeches, the only one, a quotation—

"I know not, I ask not,
 If guilt's in that heart,
 I but know that I love thee,
 Whatever thou art."

Which might imply that my heroine was not a guiltless lady. But I know she was, for *I* said so, over and over. The editor wrote me that he had "cut out some things"—that "a girl who had nobly resisted the blandishments of three roués did not need the author to declare her pure on every page."

He also wrote that "one page is enough to devote to a suicide, to have it linger over ten pages is hard on both the suicide and the reader." (Even then I had an idea that the editor was having a merry time over my tale.)

Oh, yes, the heroine had "wine-colored hair," and the editor asked if I meant "white wine or claret?" In the printed page she had auburn hair. Also, many things were not as I had written them—to my then amazement. And I didn't know then what a nice editor he was, nor how skillfully he had dressed up my "meller."

That editor is about all I do remember very well. What he wrote lodged in my mind and sticks there now, after my tale is almost wholly forgotten. I can't recall why my suicide did it, nor my hero's name, nor my heroine's; though I think it was Beatrice or Katherine—or Portia. I had been reading Shakespeare—and that was how I got my thriller.

And it was because it was a thriller that I sold it so readily. All my early tales, sold with the same ease, I attribute to like cause—enough plot and pep to compensate the editor for faulty writing. A story sent to *McClure's Magazine* brought a letter from Mr. McClure requesting me to call at his office. I went and had a long talk with him and Mr. John Phillips. They advised me to drop the thriller for awhile and devote a few years to the story of characterization. Mr. Phillips said I was one of those people who could get a plot with one hand tied behind me, and that this was sometimes a fatal gift, that it made sales too easy for the author to work hard enough to acquire a high standard of writing.

I followed their advice and got my first bumps—rejection slips—slips—*slips*—I went back to the "meller," but something had happened. I couldn't sell that. That was a dis-

couraging time. But I finally learned—at least well enough to sell my stuff—how to combine plot and characterization. I sold one story to almost every magazine in America and several to English magazines before I again sent one to *McClure's*. This I dropped in the mail box, with merely my address and return stamps. It was accepted, and was the first of the "Peggy Stories" that ran in *McClure's* for a year.

But Mr. Phillips was not then with *McClure's*, and I didn't feel that I had made good until I had sold a story to his magazine, *The American*. I had just completed a serial, "The Woman's Law," frankly a melodrama, almost the first line being "Why did you kill him?"—but there was only one murder and no seductions and sudden death, and as he had stated that he liked good melodrama, I took a chance on mine now coming under that head, and sent it to him. He promptly accepted it. *The American* also published the "Dorothy Stories," simple character tales of country life.

Mr. S. S. McClure and Mr. John S. Phillips will need no other epithaphs than those engraved in letters of gold on the hearts of American authors. Dear, kindly editors, there could be a book written on *their* efforts. And I like them still more because, like myself, they—on their own admission to me—love a "bluggy" tale. For though I long ago eliminated suicide and seduction from my themes, I have, and will always have, a weakness for murder.

JULIET WILBOR TOMPKINS

I started out as a poet, but my early verse, though maiden enough, was scarcely effort. It must have been begun before penmanship had set in, for I can remember standing in what we called "the corridor," a long, bright gallery looking on a California garden, and dictating to my mother's willing pencil an endless epic of Spring and domestic life. In those happy days all that was necessary for a poem

was a first line and a glowing, stirring feeling about the ribs.

The first real effort, coming half a dozen years later, was a novel, written secretly and often by night. When a too-observing family commented on finding nineteen apricot stones beside my bed in the morning, they little knew what that divine fruit had nourished.

The novel might have been catalogued as by The Duchess, out of Fanny Orr. Fanny Orr, no older than I, had written eight or ten novels. Her latest, "A Wildwood Violet, or The Chetwynde Mystery," was well on into its second volume; and when I found out that she had not yet decided what the mystery should be, the thing seemed easy enough even for me to undertake.

I feel a certain embarrassment at setting down my title, for it was "The Laurelei." No, this was not humor; I thought that was the way you spelled it. A cruel and beautiful girl, with a voice, broke a man's heart by methods that I have forgotten. I only remember that he killed himself in the last chapter. And this, with her wild, sweet singing, The Laurelei had done.

Things printed in *The Vassar Miscellany* would scarcely count as published. All through college I was writing verse—during lectures, in sermon time, while I was doing finger exercises to the beat of the metronome. It overran my notebooks, it rose to celebrate every event or emotion—the glow was always at my ribs.

And the whole four years I felt guilty: I was there to listen to the lectures and sermons, to take on education, not to dream over rhymes. My conscience hounded me. Yet, all the time, by that loved labor, that patient search for the right word and the good cadence, I was preparing myself as no education could have prepared me for the work ahead. The verse in itself had no value whatsoever, but its training was beyond price. I regret the guilty misery of those four happy years.

There was something in *Life*, something in *St. Nicholas*;

but the first printed work to matter—and almost the first short story I tried—was in *Munsey's Magazine*. I was in the early twenties when I made the discovery that an opening paragraph and a good warm glow would at least launch a story. One wrote as long as the glow lasted, then called for help.

When this story, "On the Way North," was finished, some one brought in a hospitable-looking copy of *Munsey's*, until then unknown to me, so the moving finger addressed the story there, and started a connection that led to years on the editorial staff. I have had people tell me that they liked that first story better than anything I have done since—the most blighting, blasting tribute that a writer is ever called upon to smile through. One decides vindictively that they haven't read anything since, but one's fighting courage is down for weeks. Don't say that to young writers!

CHARLES HANSON TOWNE

My first "poem" was written on a slate, in a hammock, one summer day when I was sixteen. My older sister, who had found out in some mysterious way of my desire to express myself in rhyme, saw me working busily over my composition and clairvoyantly knew that I was writing a "poem." She came stealthily behind me, while I was buried in thought, peered over my shoulder where I was meditating, and yelled at the top of her voice, "Charley's inspired! Charley's inspired!"

Furious, and consumed with shame that the rest of the family, to say nothing of the entire neighborhood, should learn of my poetic proclivities (why are we always ashamed of writing verse?) I fled, and, while running, attempted to rub from the slate the marks of my guilt.

But I did not succeed. Had I done so, the world would have lost these imperishable lines, which I had put down in all the sad seriousness of sixteen:

True written 'tis—
Unto all things a sequel is.
 Not unto certain things—but all!
 Of this the meaning is not small.
 And then, methinks, if 'tis all things,
 'Tis so of life!
 That complex problem! Can it be
 That souls another life shall see
 When what's called Death shall end this strife?
 Ah, no! The heart stops throbbing one short while,
 And then goes on. The radiant smile
 That crowned the lips of that poor soul
 Returns. The race unto the unseen goal
 Is once more won.
 The sequel is begun.
 "When does the soul pass the final portal?"
 Ah, friend! The sequel—soul—both are immortal!

And so, for my fell career, so called (for I have never gotten over the habit of putting my thoughts, so called, into verse), my sister is to blame. She almost stopped me that day. For had she read my tragic lines, I am afraid she would have laughed me into silence. But fate and whatever gods there be were against her!

The joke of it is that this "poem," atrocious as it was, found favor in the eyes of the editor of *The Religio-Philosophical Journal* of Chicago—a spiritualistic sheet now gone to another world, but no longer having communication with us. I got a year's subscription for my screed; and kept on.

I thought it was to be plain sailing. But no! I wrote and wrote before my next manuscript was accepted, and I must have taken all the dimes from my tin bank to pay postage. It was years before I got any money for my verses—I get little enough now.

But if editors only knew it, many a poet would give his wares away for the joy of seeing them in print.

ARTHUR TRAIN

I cannot specify my maiden effort at writing since I cannot remember the time when I was not inventing stories and editing private magazines for my own childish amusement. These were written on "penny pads," to purchase which I gave amateur circuses and theatrical performances in the garret. By the time I was thirteen I was a profound and prolific essayist on political and literary topics for my school paper, occasionally condescending to fiction after the style of Bulwer-Lytton.

When I went to college I kept it up and swamped the college magazines with fresh fiction and sentimental verse after which for a while the spring of my production became choked by the law. But even when grinding away on briefs and pleadings I always was scribbling.

One vacation, when on a camping trip, I was casting for trout in a deep pool and by accident landed, after a prolonged struggle, a snapping turtle weighing some fifty pounds. The adventure was scientific or sporting, rather than literary, but I wrote it up, sent it to *Outing*, and in time received a check for \$3.31. Just why the 31c. I never fully understood. Technically, that was my "maiden effort."

A year or so later I wrote a story entitled "Not at Home," which I showed to Mr. Alden of *Harpers'*, who advised me to burn it. Perhaps I should have done so; but I disregarded his advice and sold it to *The Smart Set* for \$35. I now think it probably the best, or certainly one of the best, I have ever written. This may have been my maiden effort.

When next I felt the creative impulse I sent the result to *McClure's*, then at the height of its muckraking and other glory under the guiding genius of the famous editor whose name it bears. The story was rejected but when returned to me it still bore inadvertently attached to it a "rider" containing the frank opinions of the editorial readers. These ranged from "weak," "puerile," "disconnected," etc., to a final line which ran, "This man could write for us" and signed Viola Roseboro.

I made up my mind that the man would write for her, redrafted the story, sold it to *McClure's* and, I think, received \$150. If this was my "maiden effort," Miss Roseboro—long life to her!—was its real mother. That was nearly twenty years ago. I am still making "maiden efforts."

LOUIS JOSEPH VANCE

Of that great actress Déjazet it is related that, having upon a time journeyed from Paris to Rouen with a troupe of players whose business it was to try on a provincial audience a certain comedy by the younger Dumas, she presently found herself, together with the entire company and the dramatist himself, haled before a local magistrate on the charge of taking part in the representation of a play calculated to impair the public morals.

Now and in the due course of the judicial proceedings the dramatist was interrogated as to his personal history.

Questioned, his sonorous accents deposed that he was one Alexandre Dumas and had been born in the City of Paris.

And monsieur's condition in life was—?

The opportunity to win sympathy through an appeal to civic pride was too tempting. The bosom of the playwright swelled, a smile of noble humility touched his features, his majestic arm carved the hushed, expectant atmosphere.

"If I were not in Rouen, the city which gave birth to the immortal Corneille," he declaimed, "I should call myself a dramatist!"

It was the simple magnificence of that gesture, more than the plaudits it earned, which made such a profound impression upon the sensitive artistic spirit of the actress. And so, when her turn came, when examination had elicited the modest admission that she was Pauline Virginie Déjazet and had, like the illustrious Monsieur Dumas, first seen the light in Paris, she awaited with some comprehensive trepidation the next question.

Inexorable as Fate it came:

“And, mademoiselle, your condition—?”

“If I were not in Rouen, the city that burned the sainted Jeanne d’Arc at the stake,” Déjazet responded with admirable candor, “I should call myself a maiden.” . . .

With like hesitation the humble manuscript whose indifferent fortunes I am to recount might claim to be my maiden effort.

For, as memory serves, I was everlastingly scribbling as a boy, and more or less aimlessly, though some of those scribbles were published entirely without cost to the author.

But if the term maiden effort (and surely a broad-minded age will not quarrel about the simon-pure significance of the adjective) be taken to mean a first attempt to write a story sufficiently readable to be sold for money, then mine was a story first entitled “The Death of the Dawn.”

Almost I forget why it sported that depressing title; I think it must have been because Death, something gratuitously, stepped in at the end to squelch a highly enterprising case of love at first sight.

It was, of course, a tragedy. It is one’s belief that most maiden efforts, except they be those of true commercial genius, are conscientiously tragic in design. For Death seems to hale Youth a contingency so mistily remote, the very thought of it is rich with the glamour of high romance. . . .

I was then twenty-one years of age and had been since eighteen a husband and since twenty a father; and the weekly stipend of eighteen dollars on which I had braved the adventure of marriage didn’t go far toward providing for the needs of three souls. I was heavily oppressed by debt; I must have owed at least a hundred dollars, possibly more, and Something Had to Be Done About It. So I wrote a story—because I had heard that as much as a cent a word was sometimes paid for short stories and couldn’t think of any other way to raise the wind.

When the story was written I was told that publishers looked with disfavor on holographic manuscripts; so I borrowed a typewriting machine of the period, a ponderous

contraption called a Caligraph that halted and stammered like a bashful elephant, with a carriage whose rumble was a tumbril's and with teeth that bit ferociously into the paper to a broken tune of sharp reports; so that neighbors complained of my indulging in home target practice with a young Gatling. And, indeed, it seems quite possible that this scarred old war-horse of a Caligraph, upon which all my earlier stuff was rewritten, may have had much to do with the type of fiction with which my name has since become associated; for it would surely have been difficult to write of anything but battle, murder and sudden death on a machine whose action had all the sound and fury of the 1812 Overture of Tschaikovski, if none of its harmony.

Well, the story being typed, I submitted it to my father for an opinion. He was an old newspaper man and a veteran of the Civil War; and it so happened that my manuscript got into his hands at a time when he was entertaining another veteran of that conflict, though one who had fought on the Southern side, Colonel Prentiss Ingraham—author of something like two thousand dime novels, of which "Montezuma the Merciless" (Beadle & Dick) attained a sale of more than two million copies.

Now my story was a Civil War story, and for that reason, I presume, those two old soldiers liked it and praised it and assured me that any editor in his right senses would jump at the chance to publish it.

But as it turned out, either all magazine editors who first saw it were imbeciles, I don't say they weren't, or—there was something wrong somewhere. I daresay I might have had fair luck with the wretched thing if it hadn't been for that confounded Unhappy Ending, a more heinous crime in those days even than in these.

Whatever the reason, "The Death of the Dawn" came home to roost with the most enervating regularity.

Meantime, that hundred or so remained unpaid; and with my father and Colonel Ingraham to egg me on I wrote another story. This second effort didn't have the Unhappy Ending, and Sam Adams bought it for the McClure News-

paper Syndicate at sight and paid me \$25 for it, and the *Sun* published it in its Sunday edition. It was a great newspaper in those days, the *Sun* was; and I have always felt that an editor of rare acumen and exquisite sympathy and understanding was lost to the magazine world when Sam turned himself into Samuel Hopkins Adams, author.

But "The Death of the Dawn" continued to wing its weary homeward way from every editor's chair the country over.

I wrote several more stories, and Sam bought one of them, and the others never did sell; and then I suffered my first acute attack of Being Written Out, at least as a short story man, and turned my failing pen, that is to say my faltering Caligraph, to the composition of footling verse and squibs for the Children's Pages that were a feature of every self-respecting Sunday newspaper in those days.

And "The Death of the Dawn" enjoyed a well-earned rest in a drawer of my desk.

Then something awful happened, I quite forget what; I only know that all of a sudden I found myself crushed squirmless by a mountain of debt. Again Something Had to Be Done About It. And by a fine ironic stroke of coincidence simultaneously there appeared on the newsstands a new weekly that called itself simply *The Brandur*, I have never understood why.

The Brandur was printed on good paper without cover or illustrations and carried few advertisements if any—none, as I remember. Its avowed aim was to purvey the best of the current literary output at the small cost of five cents the copy; and it started in to make good nobly enough by printing the first O. Henry story I ever happened to read. More charming still I found its broadcast announcement, which it went even so far as to bill in the cars of the Elevated, that it paid a minimum rate of five cents a word for everything it published, no matter what the standing of the author.

Inevitably then, and immediately too, "The Death of the

Dawn" was resurrected, given a fresh dress of typing, and submitted to *The Brandur*.

A letter came promptly from the editor, asking me to call.

His style was, I believe, Major Jones; he was urbane, free-handed and indulgent—he gave me a cigar. More than that, he was a veteran of the Civil War. In the armchair beside his desk I sat dazedly mumbling the cigar and worshipping with round eyes that princely creature who was actually telling me out loud that he purposed purchasing "The Death of the Dawn" and furthermore promising to buy other stories if I would write and send them to him.

Five cents a word!

"The Death of the Dawn" was five thousand words in length.

I made mental calculations. . . .

There was just one thing that Major Jones wanted to suggest, and did suggest with enchanting diffidence. Not for worlds would he ask me to do anything that might go against the fine grain of my conscience of an artist, but it was none the less true that Readers did prefer stories with the Happy Ending, and if I could see my way clear . . . you know . . . Major Jones would be glad . . .

It didn't take me long to see how irrefutably Right was Major Jones. And even if he had been wrong in my esteem, I'm afraid I must have humoured him if only in recognition of his touching appreciation and faith in the future of my work.

I promised to make the change as soon as ever I could, and took the manuscript away with me; and the last words I ever heard from Major Jones were those in which he repeated his promise to give me a check immediately upon receipt of the revised story.

I imagine it must have taken me all of an hour to make the designated change. But it was obvious even to my rudimentary wit that it would never do to let Major Jones know how easy it was, or let him suspect how desperately I needed the money. By main strength of will I constrained

myself to be devilish shrewd in my dealings with the genial major; and it was only after a lapse of three days that I again presented myself in the dignified offices of *The Brandur* with the manuscript in one hand and a violent itch in the palm of the other.

An office-boy with a bilious eye and sullen mouth hindered my approach to the sanctum dedicated to the editor.

"Whaddya wanta see Major Jones about?"

I demurred about gratifying such impertinent inquisitiveness, and was still engaged in formulating a retort of withering hauteur when he added:

"Cause if it's a manuscript you want to sell him, *The Brandur* suspended publication a nour ago."

A wave of an indifferent hand directed my attention to a notice posted on the glass of the outer door, a pen-written notice which I had overlooked on entering. . . .

One often marvels and with reason at the resilience of spirit in authors. Even after that I went on writing.

Two years later, or three, Anna Steese Richardson purchased "The Death of Dawn" for the McClure short story service. It fetched \$25 for "copyright and all rights." In order to make the sale I cheerfully cut the damned thing down to about twenty-five hundred words, gave it a new title, which I have forgotten, and—of course!—the Happy Ending.

MRS. SCHUYLER VAN RENSSELAER

I can hardly remember a time when I was not writing—writing, while I was very young, either verses or little moral essays. Fiction, although I longed to achieve it, I could not even attempt. I did not know how to go about it. I never had an imaginative idea that could be used in prose.

There is nothing unusual, of course, in the fact that verse came more easily than prose of any kind, or that before I was twelve I had filled various copybooks with very sentimental poems. But I think it was rather odd that, passion-

ately though I devoted myself at times to such work, I was reluctant to speak of it, still more to show its results, for no one derided or discouraged me. On the contrary, my parents were quite foolishly appreciative. But I was embarrassed rather than pleased when they praised my verses; and the first time I saw myself in print I was neither embarrassed nor pleased but frankly angry.

I had copied for my mother some verses called "Earth is Beautiful." She gave them to my uncle; he was a friend of the editor of the *Evening Post*; and conspicuous in the northwest corner of the first page of the paper, which then had nothing in the way of headlines to overshadow a modest poem, mine appeared one evening, without my name but with my initials and the explanation that I was a girl of twelve, the daughter of a "prominent merchant."

Any proper child would have been pleased; but I felt angry and outraged.

And as clearly as I remember my own feelings, I remember how my parents wondered why I was not delighted. I told them, indeed, that nothing that belonged to me ought to have been in any way disposed of without my consent; but I did not tell them that the main reason for my ill-temper was that the poem had not been allowed to stand on its own merits but had been patronizingly displayed—apologized for, I felt—as the work of a child. This, then, was my maiden effort, if the term may be taken as meaning the first of my efforts that was published—although published, so to say, in my own despite.

I wonder if many other writers can say that the first sight of their words in print gave them vexation, not pleasure?

Far different were my sensations when I first succeeded in an effort not only to write something, but to have it printed. This was an article on Decorative Art which (I tell it for the encouragement of writers now taking their first steps) was returned to me from every other magazine in the country that I could think of but was accepted by the very last of them. Had this one sent it back, there would

have been, in the limited magazine field of that day, nowhere else for it to travel to.

What I might think of it now, I do not know. But I remember that John La Farge praised it, and it is glory enough to be able to say that of one's first adult effort.

BLANCHE SHOEMAKER WAGSTAFF

I burst into print at the age of ten. At seven I was writing this type of verse:

“I cannot help where my love goes—
 If to a person of high renown
 Or any one in all this town.
 I cannot help where my love goes
 But, all I know, it flows—
 Forever!”

This ditty was occasioned by a violent admiration for a young college man with Apollonian features whom my family dubbed “undesirable as a son-in-law.” (Early I was in the pangs of the Sapphic ardor.)

At the age of ten I sought a printer in West 45th Street. New York was twenty years ago like a little country village. The printer lived in a white house with a veranda. For the sum of eleven dollars he printed my first literary effusions in a four-page leaflet, under the elusive cognomen *La Première*.

The little newspaper consisted of notes on current politics, stocks, modes for cycling and a cryptogram. (I had been reading Edgar Allan Poe.) There was a long love story, one of those blood-curdlers, where the hero, thwarted in love, plunges to his death *à la* modern movies. (I remember whenever I found myself perplexed by a plot I took refuge in killing off my characters with Bluebeardian delight.)

Here is one of the verses from my little newspaper, called “Waiting In Vain”:

Oh, the longing and the watching
 O'er the great ocean sea,
 The happiness and joyfulness
 Which bring by ship to me!
 The bright lights are shining
 'Mid the brilliant lighted street,
 Acquaintances go by and nod when they meet.

There's the newsboy's startling call,
 "Lost the *Maryland* in an awful squall!"
 "Give me a paper, sonny," I say.
 "My girl lost—lost in the spray,—
 "But I'll be with her today!"

My thoughts are wandering
 Beyond the distant shore
 Where my girl awaits me
 Who lives forevermore!
 Death smites me, so I'll fly
 To my loved one
 Beyond the sky"

Here also, twenty years ago, the perennial:

W. J. Bryan is attempting to get back in favor with the Democrats, and many persons declare he will be next President.

After this flight with Pegasus, the leaflet was distributed amongst friends and school boys. But there was no "La Seconde." *La Première* was the beginning and the end of my newspaper juvenilia!

Until I was twenty I did practically nothing but write. I never played like other children, but stole away with pads and pencils to compose stories and transcribe the songs which murmured involuntarily in my ears. . . . I covered reams of foolscap, and kept many diaries, reading also with a feverish pleasure. Literature was always to me the supreme experience.

At sixteen I received my first payment for verse, four dollars. Browning and Swinburne had been my chief enchantments about this time, and the lyric which was accepted by "*Town and Country*" was a momentous event in my life. So intense was my youthful pride and joy that I never cashed the check! It hangs today framed in my studio!

A little over a year later I received a good royalty offer for a manuscript of verse, "The Song of Youth." This was published in Boston, and sold like wild-fire, as the press dubbed it "precocity, out of the mouths of babes and sucklings." It was a collection of startling love-songs.

But now I am a sedate essayist, critic and Greek student,—writing poetry for the magazines at five dollars a line!

CAROLYN WELLS

True ease in writing comes from art, not chance,
As those move easiest who have learned to dance.

Pope's couplet, like most draughts of the Pierian spring, contains about 2.75% of the real thing. For many move easily and gracefully who have never learned to dance, and much ease in writing *is* mere chance. However, like the man in the old story, "I did not mean to sing a hymn," and my rhymes came by chance not art.

Notwithstanding Pope's dictum, writing is not an art, it is nature. It cannot be learned, it is inborn.

All of which is by way of correcting the popular concept of a maiden effort.

And, though regretting the necessity of being personal, I must needs refer to my own First Step. First two steps rather, for I made one in prose, and, with the other foot, one in verse.

The prose effort was a story for girls, which was accepted by *The St. Nicholas*, and published serially therein, afterward appearing in book form over the imprint of The Century Co.

A copy of this book, "The Story of Betty," in a fine, red cover, was handed to me by the editor of *St. Nicholas*, with the kindly remark, "Here is your book. May it prove to be the first of a long line of volumes from your pen."

His pleasant words proved prophetic, for well over a hundred volumes now flank that first book.

And yet, referring to my theory, which is not Pope's, that book has sold more copies than any other I have written, and is still selling steadily, with a satisfactory royalty statement every year. So much for a maiden effort—

My verse-writing is a slightly different story, for fancy steps in dancing and fancy flings in meter must be *learned*.

At the time I was writing "The Story of Betty" I chanced upon a copy of *The Lark* of blessed memory.

Hardly a man is now alive, I find, who remembers that inimitable (though imitated) masterpiece.

At my first reading of its first number, I was fired with a desire to appear on its almost inaccessible pages.

A letter to its editor brought a frightening statement of the practically insurmountable difficulties attending acceptance of manuscript.

Humbled, but far from discouraged, I began work on light verse, and aided and greatly abetted by the editor, who changed from censor consecutively to guide, philosopher and friend, I finally achieved the unique position of a woman contributor to *The Lark*.

But the achievement came only after nearly two years of dogged perseverance and desperately hard work.

My teacher was a stickler for perfection of mechanism in the matter of construction—and English shapes as well as French forms must have no tiniest flaw in their make-up.

Wherefore, urged on by a determination to succeed and helped along by harsh criticism and dire condemnation from my preceptor, I learned the rudiments of poetic architecture—I learned to dance in rhyme.

But all this refers only to manner, not to matter. Versifying may be achieved, but verse, as Oliver Herford has said, is a gift—a birthday gift.

And yet, my maiden effort, as it finally appeared on the pages of *The Lark*, was in prose, after all! It was entitled "Solistry" and described a method of telling character by the lines on the sole of the feet.

However, all the rejected ballades, villanelles, pantomimes and such rickshaws were offered to more catholic-minded periodicals with gratifying success, so I concluded that Light Verse was my Happy Hunting Ground, and I continued to browse therein.

And so, while merit in writing is God-given, I claim that with the great majority of writers, the maiden effort (not now considering artificial forms) is quite as likely to be an author's masterpiece, as is the fruit of his maturer years.

At least, this is true of great authors, and ought to be true of the rest of us.

STEWART EDWARD WHITE

I have been asked to tell something about my maiden effort in literary work. On examining the happy family of literary progeny I have gathered about me in the course of twenty years, I discover that there are a number of those charming damsels.

For example, there is the first thing I ever wrote and hoped to get published; and there is the first thing I ever wrote and did get published. These fair creatures are quite different individuals from the first thing of mine that was both published and paid for, Oh, quite different; and considerably older.

And I class the first serial as a maiden; at least I have never had cause to suspect her; and I assure you she was entirely respectable.

Since there is doubt as to which of this galaxy of youth and freshness is indicated by the specifications laid down for me, perhaps it would be as well to trot them out in turn and let you take your choice.

The first thing I ever wrote and hoped to get published—but did not, thank Heaven!—was what might be called a short serial called “Aliris.”

It was deeply symbolical. Its scene was in Arabia, principally because I knew so little about Arabia, and I was strong on local color swiped from the County Library.

The hero about fitted his name. He was Tempted in all sorts of ways, I remember; but Resisting Nobly, he was at last taken by the Angel Azrael to a point where a bird’s-eye-view of Infinity showed him that if the slow movements of the planets and stars and suns were speeded up sufficiently—which is only a matter of relativity, naturally—they would descry words or symbols; just as a brand waved rapidly enough would make a circle of fire. These words or symbols spelled the secret of the Universe, which the smug Aliris had failed to find in these aforementioned Temptations.

What that secret was has escaped me for the moment; as has the ultimate fate of my silky hero. He must have been about steen million years in the future; unless they had some sort of reverse process, like rewinding a film.

This masterpiece met with only dazed incredulity from those to whom it was submitted. That was before the days of Motion Pictures. I am sure I could get it over now if I could find the MSS.

The first thing I wrote and did get published was a much more sober creature.

In my extreme youth I lived much in the woods; and naturally noted what existed therein and the manner of its existence. In a moment of expansion I wrote in plain English on one side the paper a few remarks about Nuthatches, Woodpeckers, Kinglets and Yellow Rumps, and how they had beat it just before a storm, which same was sagacious of them. I got this over in 300 words; and sent it to a small sheet called *The Oologist*.

It was published, with my name at the bottom. This memorable date was June, 1890. That was also the date on which I started my first scrap-book.

The years rolled on. I continued to write about birds

and sich, not only for *The Oologist*, but for such more august journals as *The Wolverine Naturalist*, *Nature's Realm*, *The Ornithologist*, and *The Breeder and Sportsman*, all of which are of course as well known to you as *The Saturday Evening Post*. I got so erudite on the dicky birds, that I acquired a reputation for long white whiskers.

More years rolled on. I went to and out of college: I invaded and retreated from the goldfields of the West. I landed for a law course in Columbia University.

Just on the side, and because I admired the man, I took a class on the short story under Professor Brander Matthews.

The time came when I had to write one, which same I did. Professor Matthews saw something in it, and advised me to submit it. I did so, to *Short Stories*. They accepted it, paid me ten dollars for it, and so launched me on a professional career. I did other short stories, for *Lippincott's The Argonaut*, *Munsey's*, and *McClure's*. For most of these I received twenty-five dollars. *McClure's* paid me fifty dollars for the one they took; but they held the English rights, and got most of it back; so I figured twenty-five as magnificent and sufficient.

About this time I finished two books I had been working on simultaneously, called "The Claim Jumpers" and "The Westerners." From my short story writing I had learned that it is a good idea to write about something with which you are familiar, and to put it into plain language.

The Westerners I sent in to *Munsey's*. They wrote that they would take it and mentioned that they thought five hundred dollars would be about right.

I did not believe them. As I happened to be in New York at the moment, I hustled around to the office. Nobody had corrected the mistake. I asked if they could pay me then. They said they could. I asked if they had cash rather than a check. They looked surprised; but said they would see.

I was afraid they would find out their mistake and stop payment on a check before I could get it cashed.

They gave the amount to me in fives and tens; and the

result was an imposing roll. I had not really grasped the fact that there could be so much money in the world.

New York was large, and they did not know where I lived, so after I got to the street I felt comparatively safe. I have never been so well paid for a serial since. Oh yes, I have had more money paid me; but never knew the thrill.

So there are my maiden efforts. Take your choice of the pretty creatures.

WILLIAM ALLEN WHITE

My first literary effort was composed when I was a printer's devil in 1885.

I was set at the task of getting up copy for the paper and I went to work and set up out of my own head an obituary of Samuel J. Tilden. Not showing it to the Editor, I turned it in to the proofreader, and he turned it in, and it appeared in the paper.

The Editor never said anything to me about it, but when the paper was out I happened to be where the editor of the opposition paper was reading our paper and heard him laughing fit to kill at my first effusion. He thought it was written by our Editor, and as it was not in his style and was in a rather florid lugubrious style, the opposition editor was laughing hilariously at the fool editorial in our paper.

It was a rather sad experience for a young author.

After that, I confined my literary efforts to setting up the local items when I was at the case, rather than editorial effusions.

MARGARET WIDDEMER

It is lost; lost irretrievably.

It was dictated to a devoted aunt at the age of four, and mailed by her to the children's page of either *The Christian Advocate* or *The Churchman*. And it was published. They headed it "A Little Poetess." A letter, also by me, went with it; the consciously infantine letter, I have

no doubt, which small children usually send to pages for publishing their letters, if such, with their accompanying Aunt Sunshines and Grandma Grays, still exist.

The poem began "Goldenrod, O Goldenrod!"—that much I can remember. It wasn't more than a quatrain. What happened to the goldenrod in the other three lines I have no idea at all. I can remember seeing the goldenrod (the original) as I was driven along in the hated Sunday phaeton of my infancy and bursting into verse about it; but the verse itself is dead to fame.

There was another one though which I *do* remember; I wish I didn't. I was seven by this time and having been taught to read before I was five by more fond relatives, had discovered Adelaide Anne Proctor and Longfellow, and felt that I ought to do what Adelaide did. So I sat down at my grandfather's study table and did this:

Dear, let us keep love's temple
 Sacred and far apart
 From the little frets and worries
 That sear and scar the heart;
 For that is Love's own temple
 And where he must always dwell
 From the time before the wedding
 Till he hears the funeral knell.

Though on the whole it isn't so bad for seven!

I had been brought up so much with grown people that I had what seems now a very good vocabulary. It is, I confess, a little offensively moral, but in those days I felt that one *had* to be moral if one did poems. That is, unless one did love-poems. Then one had to be heartbroken. In fact, I was conscientiously heartbroken in poetry long after I was grown up and selling poetry to adult magazines.

As for my maiden prose effort, as I wrote from the time I knew how to make a pen work, that, too, is doubtless dead. I remember something called "Mabel's Visit to Holiday-Land," which even now seems a luscious subject. I only got her as far as Fourth-of-July Land, because I wrote so slowly

and with such manual difficulty; for by now the devoted aunt had rebelled at being my amanuensis. She wrote herself; and I suppose wanted a little time for it.

But the first thing I ever published! It was a very snappy magazine, and I got eight dollars for it, it being a three-thousand word story. As I was a minister's daughter of nineteen it was bright purple in atmosphere. It seems to me that it began:

The girl threw her supple, scarlet-clad body back against the man's knees. She was like a little flame leaping up. "It's no use," she said, dully. "I used your love for a drug but it does not drug me."

The man, a kind soul, reasoned with her for the rest of the story. Finally, he gave her a different variety of kiss from the ones which, from conscientious motives, he had been dealing out till then, and she found herself properly anesthetized. I don't believe I could do it now—any of it. (My mother had not burned "Three Weeks" soon enough. I'd read it through twice before she found it under the mattress.)

After that I went to work at short stories and romances that people bought. I used to be introduced with the aside: "Very young—just *beginning* to write."

They (as I would have said ten years before) little knew!

KATE DOUGLAS WIGGIN

My real advent into print was a three-part story, accepted by *The St. Nicholas*, and paid for (*mirabile dictu*) to the extent of \$150.

I was seventeen; and why I did not consider myself a full-fledged author embarked upon a successful career I can hardly tell; but a period of common-sense overtook me with considerable severity. I examined myself and though I discovered an intense desire to write I discovered nothing to write about. I had neither knowledge nor experience, nor yet the genius which supplies at a pinch the place of both; so

somewhat regretfully, I turned my back on literature (the muse showing a most unflattering indifference) and took a peep into life.

All my instincts led me towards work with children, so I studied educational methods for a year and a half, finishing with a course of kindergarten theory and practice. Then most unexpectedly I found myself in the position of organizing the first free kindergarten work west of the Rocky Mountains, my sphere of effort being a precinct in San Francisco known as "Tar Flat."

This is not the place to describe that experiment which under favoring circumstances took root, blossomed and bore fruit all up and down the Pacific Coast. Suffice it to say I was too busy with living to think of writing. I was helping, in my woman's way (I fear at first it was but a girl's way) to do my share of the world's work, and it absorbed all my energies of mind, body and soul.

But though the public was generous there was never money enough! Fifty children under school age, between four and six, were enrolled, but the procession of waiting mothers grew longer daily. Patrick's mother, Henri's, Levi's, Angelo's, Leo's, Katarina's, Selma's, Alexandrina's stood outside asking when there would be room for more children.

On a certain October day I wondered to myself could I write a story, publish it in paper covers and sell it here and there for a modest price, the profits to help towards the establishment of a second kindergarten?

Preparations for Christmas were already in the air, and as I sat down at my desk in a holiday spirit, I wrote in a few days my real first book, "The Birds' Christmas Carol." It was the simplest of all possible simple tales, the record of a lame child's life; a child born on Christmas Day and named Carol by Mr. and Mrs. Bird, her father and mother.

The Dark Ages in which I wrote were full of literary Herods who put to death all the young children within their vicinity, and I was no exception. What saved me finally was a rudimentary sense of humor that flourished

even in the life I was living; a life in which I saw pain and suffering, poverty and wretchedness, cruelty and wickedness struggling against the powers for good that lifted their heads here and there, battling courageously and often overcoming.

If Carol Bird and her family were inclined to sentimentality (as I have reason to fear), the Ruggles brood who lived "in the rear" were perhaps a wholesome antidote. Mrs. Ruggles, and the nine big, middle-sized and little Ruggleses, who inhabited a small house in an alley that backed on the Bird mansion—these furnished a study of contrasts and gave a certain amount of fun to counteract my somewhat juvenile tendency to tears.

All this was more than thirty-five years ago. How could one suppose that the unpretentious tale would endure through the lapse of years? Yet it appeared again in a brave new dress with illuminated borders to its pages and richly colored illustrations, properly grateful, I hope, but never scornful of the paper covers in which it was born.

I wrote a preface to that new edition, a preface in which I have addressed, not the public, but the book itself, which has grown through the passage of time, to possess a kind of entity of its own.

To my Dear First Book (so I began):

Here you are on my desk again after twenty-eight years, in which you have worn out your plates several times and richly earned your fine new attire. . . .

You have been a good friend to me, my book—none better. . . . At the very first, you earned the where-withal to take a group of children out of the confusion and dangers of squalid streets and transport them into a place of sunshine, safety and gladness. Then you took my hand and led me into the bigger, crowded world where the public lives. You brought me all the new, strange experiences that are so thrilling to the neophyte. The very sight of your familiar title brings them back afresh! Proof-sheets in galleys, of which one prated learnedly to one's awe-stricken family; then

the Thing Itself, in covers; and as one opened them tremblingly in secret there pounced from the text some clumsy phrase one never noted before in all one's weary quest for errors. Then reviews, mingling praise and blame; then letters from strangers; then, years after, the story smiling at one cheerily, pathetically, gratefully, from patient rows of raised letters printed for blind eyes; then, finally, the sight of it translated into many foreign tongues.

Would that I had had more art—even at the expense of having had less heart—with which to endow you, but I gave you all of both I had to give, and one can do no more. In return you have repaid me in ways tangible and intangible, ways most rare and beautiful, even to bringing me friendships in strange lands, where people have welcomed me for your sake. Then go, little book on your last journey into the world. Here are my thanks, good comrade, and here my blessing! Hail and farewell!

Does all this have too sentimental a ring? I hope not, but at any rate, one always has a bit of license where a first love or a first book are concerned, particularly if the first love or first book have lasted over the silver wedding day.

MARY E. WILKINS

In reality I suppose my "maiden effort" was poetry. I suppose that is nearly everybody's maiden effort, if they own up, but since no sane person can possibly call me a success in poetry, I begin with prose.

It was a prize story. I do not own a copy. The one and only was loaned and never returned and is somewhere, with unreturned umbrellas, in limbo.

It is a pity I haven't it, because as I remember it, it was quite passable as an imitation of Charles Dickens. The title was "A Shadow Family."

The story won a prize of fifty dollars and when I went with a friend to claim it the Prize Committee thought the friend must have written the story because I did not look as if I knew enough. She could easily have secured my prize, but she had a New England conscience. That fifty dollars still looms up as larger than all the billions of debt consequent upon the World War. Lucky for Europe that she does not have to pay *that* fifty dollars. It has the market value of the Solar System.

The first step I took upon receiving it was to invest cautiously a small portion in souvenirs bought in ten cent stores, then in their sweet infancy. Then I gave away the rest.

I hope nobody will think me too good for earth because of that. I gave joyfully and it is the one and only instance where my bread has been returned to me manifold.

I immediately left poetry as a result of that story and sent "Two Old Lovers" to *Harpers' Bazaar*. It was accepted after being nearly turned down because the editor at first glance at my handwriting thought it was the infantile effort of a child, not worth reading.

When I got the check for that out of the post-office box I nearly collapsed with pure pride and delight.

I put one dollar of that into an envelope and sent it to an impecunious woman whom I did not know. I bought a souvenir for my father, one for my mother, and oil paints for myself. Then I painted some pansies from life on a little piece of Academy board. That piece of art is in the same limbo with the umbrellas and the prize story.

Then—after my father died—my assets were four dollars in hand and a mortgaged half of a building,—I sold my first story to *Harper's Magazine*, and received a check for seventy-five dollars.

I fear my altruism and love for art were at that time in abeyance for I know only too well what I did with that sum. I gave away a tenth, as an old man might carry a chestnut in the pocket as a charm against rheumatism; but I was wearing shabby black. I bought at once a fine gown, trimmed with black fur, and a fur-trimmed silk coat, and

sailed down Main Street in a certain village, disgracefully more elated over my appearance than possible literary success.

However, I give myself the tardy credit of being perfectly conscious, whether or not I have succeeded, in caring more in my heart for the art of my work than for anything else.

MARGUERITE WILKINSON

I began making maiden efforts when I was about five years old, before my presumably chubby fingers knew how to form the letters of English script. I may have been a year or two older—there is no certain record—when I composed the following charming lyric:

Violet wild, I know thee well,
 For thy shadow falls on the mossy dell
 Where soft winds kiss each pretty blue petal
 And speak to my heart while the dew doth settle.

Please note the skill of that rhyme—"petal"—"settle." And that word "doth"!

I was a little bit older when I wrote a poem that was inspired by Gray's "Elegy." It was called "Down Upon the Hillside" and I thought it quite as good as the old masterpiece that had inspired it. I was a Freshman in High School when I made my maiden effort to write a sonnet. I arranged the lines properly but the first line limped.

What is hope when flat refusal tolls her knell?

The study of the sonnet led to a lively intellectual interest in scansion. I tried all the experiments that my books suggested. I translated the French, German, Latin and Greek poets whose work I studied in school into metrical English. I was never satisfied with the results, however, and I began to have ideas of my own about what Saintsbury calls "the prosodic genius" of the English language. I found it very easy to make verse according to the rules in

the rhetorics—a quite mechanical process. But I realized that, having made verse correctly, I had not made poetry.

Then I came across Whitman's poetry and for a time I thought that, after all, thought and feeling were more important than form. But that was only for a very short time. When I made the acquaintance of Lanier he became, through his great book, "The Science of English Verse," a permanent and important influence in my life. I still believe that his theory of rhythm is absolutely sound, as far as it goes, and that all young poets should study him. He shows clearly that a poem ought to have a well-wrought-out design, what is often called "form," but he also shows how rhythms can be used much more freely than they were used in the period preceding our own, more freely than they have ever been used by minor poets of any period, without losing the mnemonic values that makers of modern free verse usually do lose.

While I was still in college I won several small cash prizes for maiden efforts in various kinds of prose and verse. My first poem was accepted by a Western magazine for mothers, whose exact title I have forgotten; but the magazine suspended publication before my poem appeared—a bitter blow!

My first bit of prose to be accepted was a short sketch describing a little girl whose feelings had been hurt by an unkind grown-up. It was called "A Child's Gift" and was published by *The Young Churchman* in Milwaukee. With the three dollars which they paid me for it I bought a flamboyant water color sketch of a parrot on a branch painted in fifteen minutes by T. Aoki, Japanese artist. This I offered to my mother as the first fruit of my labor with the pen.

Shortly after that, Bannister Merwin, then with F. A. Munsey, accepted a short story and a poem. The short story was called, "The End of the Race." Mr. Merwin most kindly criticized a good many of my stories for me, hoping that I could write more that would be available. But that was not my gift. I have always hoped that some

day I might meet him and be able to thank him personally for taking so much trouble.

Then William Hayes Ward of *The Independent* began to accept my poetry and gave me some excellent advice. The best of my early verse was published in that magazine to which I have been proud and happy to contribute much of my work, and in *The Craftsman*, whose kindly Managing Editor, Mary Fanton Roberts, is now Editor of *The Touchstone*, to which magazine I am a regular contributor.

When my first effort to "make" *The Craftsman* made it, I went to see Mrs. Roberts and asked her why the little poem had been accepted.

"Let me see," she said, quizzically—"it may have been because there was nothing in it about Phoebus Apollo!"

Editors have always treated me well. I am as grateful to them now for rejecting most of the things they rejected as for accepting the things they accepted. And I am more grateful to the editors who helped me in the hard days of beginning than to any others, naturally. May they find an Elysium where authors will delight to give them fame and do them honor!

BEN AMES WILLIAMS

I had been bombarding editors for four years without breaching their fortifications—(technical accuracy). If the hundred or so of stories written and returned to oblivion during that period are maiden efforts, you may make the most of them.

I set out to write the hundred and first, and write it so that it would sell.

I had tried to sell stories on plot, to sell them on description, to sell them on incident, to sell them on style; and had failed.

This time I set out to sell one on characterization. The test was this: that each character should be easily identified from any utterance of that character in the story.

1. There was an old darky, who talked in dialect. That was easy enough. 2. There was a maiden aunt who was very, very prim indeed; and her conversation made this plain. 3. There was another aunt who was a horsey suffragette and sounded like one. 4. The young man who carried the burdens and wore the wings of the hero stuttered on the first word of every sentence. 5. The heroine alone talked normally. It was a relief to deal with her.

Such phrases as "said Aunt Sabrina," or "answered John" were entirely superfluous in that tale. The dialogue ran like this:

"Sh-Sh-She's a w-w-wonder, Aunt Sabrina."

"You're a dear to think so, John!"

"Well, my dear, you are a promising young filly, you know."

"Why Laura, I'm afraid your language is somewhat uncouth for unaccustomed ears."

"Lawdy, Mis' Sabrina, dat chile's used to langwidge. She wu'ks on a newspaper."

And so on; and so on. It was called "The Wings of 'Lias"; and Mr. MacLean bought it for *Smith's Magazine*—on condition. The condition was that I cut out the young man's stuttering, the suffragist's horseyness, the other aunt's primness, and temper the dialect of the darky.

I did. When I was through, you couldn't tell one character from another. But he took the story, and printed it, too.

JOHN FLEMING WILSON

That people should call the first-born of genius a maiden effort is just like them. But it is nothing compared to the terms they use about one's later work; so I for one shall not complain.

I never thought of myself as an author until I had completed my college course—completed it as far as an unsympathetic faculty permitted.

I can recall no yearnings, no first intimations of immorality during the long years I divided my time between going to and fro upon a delightful earth and studying the works of great men.

And I recall with great vividness the afternoon when, perforce of nostalgia for a land thousands of miles away, I sat me down at a table in a grimly scholastic hall and dipped pen for the first time to put my feelings on paper.

It was a hazy day in April, in New Jersey, at the very moment when the bland winds of spring were touching the dank countryside into mellowness. From somewhere a slight and almost imperceptible aroma of the South had threaded in, a mere whiff of heavy scent. Below me, aslant in long chairs, two lads were strumming their banjos. Above me a theological student was intoning his first sermon with many a rise and fall of a husky voice. In the vague distance a tennis match was on, marked by shrill laughter and hearty guffaws.

But I was not writing of New Jersey.

I was trying to depict what I still look upon as one of the happiest moments of my life—flat on my tummy above the fiddley hatch of a Scottish tramp, with the Sea of Japan opening before me, a feather of brown sail aslant of the horizon, above me the last of an Ohkotsk Sea gale drumming into the blue and a new, freshly colored sun streaming down on my shoulders.

I suppose I wrote some four thousand words, with great astonishment at my own facility. It was deep dusk when I had finished. The banjoists were still serenading a few misty stars. But I had (so it seemed) caught at a pro-founder and sweeter melody.

I sent my sixteen pages of heavily written manuscript to S. S. McClure—because I had just read some stories in his latest issue that appealed to me. Within five days I got back my manuscript, with five pages of Mr. McClure's unforgettable scrawl telling me I some day would write a big story.

That he was a poor prophet doesn't matter. I believed

him. I was twenty-two and capable of enormous credulity. I sat me down, careless of the call of my remunerative toil, and wrote again. Once more McClure patted me on the back.

I wrote again, and sent it this time to *The Saturday Evening Post*. You see, I had gained confidence. The story came back, with a nice letter telling me to send it to *Munsey's*.

This injunction I obeyed. Within three days I received a note which informed me that if I was reliable, honest, civil to my superiors, of good family, recognized by the élite and able to furnish a single banker's reference, *Munsey's* would buy.

Here was an impasse. My parents were in Europe. I *had* come of good family, but it was doubtful in my mind whether the representatives of my ancestors would look complacently on my writing for fiction magazines. The only banker I knew was notoriously a mean man, a man four thousand miles away, unapproachable, brutal and malign.

Who would legitimize my maiden effort?

I thought and thought. I consulted my single friend. He opined (after reading the story, a copy of which I handed him) that I was in the very devil of a fix.

"Nobody," he said, "would like that story."

Now he spoke the family tongue, the *lingua franca* of my honored ancestors. "Nobody" meant "none of our people."

I spent the night in misery. But at daybreak I remembered that a most estimable gentleman, fully recognized by my family as "placed," had written fiction. I dressed myself carefully and travelled far and laid my *Munsey* letter on the desk of Bliss Perry. He was complacent. His position was assured. He wrote the required note to Mr. *Munsey*. I sent it. For some reason Mr. *Munsey* (who had never, I am sure, had the faintest business connection with Mr. Perry) stretched a point and sent me a check for twenty-five dollars.

I had a deuce of a time cashing this check. The coin in

hand, I went to New York. I went ten thousand miles. I circled the earth. I landed in San Francisco months later with the last two bits thereof in my pocket. And when I went to the Occidental Hotel to get my accumulated mail Colonel Hooper drew me aside.

"There is a story by a chap of your name in the last *Munsey's*," he said, mysteriously. "Have you any money? Your father's credit is good, you know."

I borrowed twenty-five dollars from him and spent ten cents on the magazine. I read my story, and re-read it, and folded it into my pocket. By the mercy of God nobody else remembers that yarn. But I do. It is still (to me) the best thing I ever did. Tucked away somewhere in its involved English are the words that form the cryptogram of boyish happiness, ambition and passion. I'm afraid sometimes I have lost the key. But still—in certain moments—I discover again in those pages the legend of my youth.

OWEN WISTER

What is the proper definition of a maiden effort? Does it mean one's first professional appearance as an author, or does it mean one's first appearance as an author in any print whatsoever? In my doubt, let me assume that each of these appearances is a maiden effort, and then I cannot fail to be at least half right.

The boys of St. Paul's School, Concord, New Hampshire, have published for many years a paper known as *The Horæ Scholasticæ*. To that school I went in September, 1873. I was then thirteen years old.

One of the older boys, an editor of the paper, who knew me at home, came to me and asked if I would try to write something.

A few months previous to this I had been in London and upon a visit to the Polytechnic Institution had gone down in a diving bell, which made descents into a pool several times every afternoon. This had been an interesting experience, accompanied by considerable pain in the ears,

owing to the compressed air, and the memory of it was vivid.

As I supposed nobody else at the school had ever gone down in a diving bell, this seemed to me the most interesting subject I could choose for an article in the school paper.

I wrote it. It was accepted and printed that autumn; it was the first of many contributions, both in prose and verse, to the school paper, and to various papers at Harvard College a few years later. Perhaps I should mention that it was in prose.

Now I reach what may seem to some my correct maiden effort. During my senior year at Harvard, I wrote eight lines of verse upon the subject of Beethoven. This I did not, as usual, send to one of the college papers, but to *The Atlantic Monthly*.

To my extreme astonishment and pride, these verses were accepted and published in *The Atlantic Monthly* during the year 1882, though I entirely forget in what month. I received a check for them, which I put away with such care lest it be lost that I never found it again. At least that is my recollection.

These are the two adventures, one of which must assuredly be with propriety called my maiden effort; the choice of the propriety I leave to the indulgent reader.

H. C. WITWER

At the beginning of the year 1915 I was reading copy on the telegraph desk of the New York *Evening Sun*, having progressed to this point and my twenty-fifth birthday after several years as soda dispenser, bathtub salesman, hotel clerk, press agent, manager of pugilists, reporter, feature writer and editor—with various stops in between too humorous to mention.

My weekly copy reader's tip being insufficient to support me and my fair young bride in the style we had determined

to become accustomed to, I cast about for some field of endeavor open to a bright young man during the hours when I was not shaking a mean blue pencil and writing "DARING YEGGS GET \$50,000 GEMS," etc.

I made no attempt to dodge tradition; so, being a newspaper man, I wrote a story of newspaper life for *The Saturday Evening Post*.

Unfortunately, I did not *sell* the manuscript to that rising young publication, nor to any one of some thirty other magazines to which I afterwards sent it. The most striking thing about this yarn was its title. I called it "The Come-Back"—and that's what it did.

But it drew some friendly letters and a couple of personal interviews, which resulted in my writing a series of theatrical yarns in slang for *The Popular Magazine*. These began in April, 1915, and shortly thereafter I eased out of the newspaper game to become a less interesting writer and a full-fledged fictioneer.

I've published nearly two hundred stories since then, five books, none of which indicates that the mantle of O. Henry has fallen upon me, written some mediocre movies, a couple of impossible plays and, like every other American author, was a war correspondent in 1917-18.

The following data may interest lay readers who wonder how authors really live, and colleagues for purposes of comparison:

I sold a dozen stories before getting a hundred dollars for any one of them, and forty-four before I got two hundred. In eighteen months I hurled thirty-six yarns at the *Post* before getting in and was four years more advancing to the criminal rate of \$1,500 a story and being regularly accused of plagiarizing Ring Lardner by the best known columnist on the New York *Tribune*.

That's about all; and thanks for listening.

CLEMENT WOOD

My maiden effort is just three years old. She is hazel-eyed, golden-haired, and answers to the name of Janet.

Before she arrived, I could boast only a cat—a feline lifted out of her natal delicatessen shop to purr at our Miltonic salutation of Miss Chaos-and-Black-Night Wood. Miss Chaos (she retained her maiden name, even after she had responded to the Romeo-awing of a gentleman Tom, one moon-mad August night in Croton-on-Hudson), in deference to her literary upbringing presented the family with a—you have conjectured rightly—litter of three kittens; but that is three other tales.

Janet came alone.

Prior to her appearance, her parents had perused the helpful works of Mrs. Perkins-Stetson-Gilman, Signora Montessori, and Mrs. Sanger, upon the proper upbringing of the young. Her parents were poor, and thus necessarily honest. But when the judges for the Newark 250th Anniversary Poetry Contest awarded the quarter-thousand Ford wheels to her prospective father, there was no further obstacle to paging the young lady, and she responded with proper promptitude. She should have been named Roberta Treat Newarka Wood; but Janet sufficed.

Her earliest recorded remarks adopted a definite futuristic metier; she breathed *vers libre*.

Ma-ma
I want
My brecky!

Contact with a conservative father led to a pragmatic dabbling in rhyme, as when she enunciated:

Nice
Ice. . . .
See, see.
Hwismas Hwee!

This lacks the elaboration of my first printed effort. To visualize the achievement, let me sketch the background.

I was born, at an early age, in Tuscaloosa, in the apsycho-lithic state of Alabama. If you have once seen the town you cannot fail to forget it. It lies to the left of the railroad and has a post office and one of the state residences for morons. At the age of ten months I accompanied my parents to Birmingham, also in Alabama, that commonwealth with the Utopian motto, "Here We Rest."

Despite this environment I was so precocious that by my eleventh year I had heard of Roosevelt. That year Theodore the Great visited the megalopolis of Alabama. Quite spontaneously I hildaconklinged this quatrain, which was centered on the first page of the weakly Mineral Belt Gazette:

Pop! Fizz!
 Gee Whiz!
 Is Teddy coming?
 Sure he is!

This was shown Mr. Roosevelt during a pause in his great speech in Capitol Park. Without visible hesitation he continued the speech.

Let it be noted that I am a staunch advocate of higher education. I owe all to my collegiate training. It was a chance scribble of the state university's instructor in Written English that determined my future career. Upon the margin of one of those poems cantoing on,

The day is always brightest
 In Alabama.
 The ton is always lightest
 In Alabama.
 The heart is always truest,
 Blue Sunday is the bluest,
 And there's only one Who's Whoist
 In Alabama.

the jealous Chiron had annotated: "Judging from your verse alone, you had best stick to prose." I have been writing verse ever since.

I was regarded as an arch-radical in the South. I did not like mint juleps.

Accordingly, I came North; and I can testify that without exception the Northerners took me in, whenever I was simple enough. In passing, I had inaugurated the Millennium in Birmingham by being appointed, as a Socialist, to the police magistracy. A Socialist, in the South, is as common as an altruistic New York landlord. After nine months the Millennial Express was side-tracked for repairs; and Birmingham is still able to Jim Crow over its victory. Once in the meridian of Greenwich Village, I went in for archeological research, and have endeavored to decipher the ancient lore of the post-Freudians, and of the forgotten worshipers of Jung.

My first sale was to one of the Four Spinsters of the magazine world. I had bombarded the sacred Quaternity for years; and finally rebelled against the postal taxation without representation on the sacred pages. Disguised as an advertiser, I slipped by the office boy, and confronted the editor in his den.

"See here," I demanded, waving my last rejected masterpiece, "have you really read this?"

"Of course not," he deprecated. "I am the editor."

"Don't you read contributions?"

"My time is occupied improving our rejection slips."

"Why can't I land?"

He surveyed me with pitying detachment. "Our readers accept only well-known authors."

"So every editor tells me. How then can I become well known?"

For the first time in his career, I think, that editor went through a mental process. He came to the surface plainly puzzled. "That is an interesting problem," he admitted, ". . . for you."

"Aren't these verses good?"

He read them carefully. "They're really excellent, Mr.—er—Wood. But I should venture that they are not up to your previous efforts."

"Which you did not accept."

"Quite true. But we have a rule—"

"This is the exception that proves it."

The editor recognized this dialect at once. A check for the poem reached me precisely twenty-four hours after the two-years' lapse between acceptance and publication.

The editor was removed soon after my poem appeared; I will not speculate upon the reason. I have never sold that magazine since; but I recommend the method to those who have failed with every other. And I keep cheerful by recalling that somewhere, somewhere, lies the royalty road to success.

MRS. WILSON WOODROW

The remembrance of my first adventure in Literature inevitably induces moral reflections. It was an experience so painfully disillusionizing, so enlighteningly disastrous in its results that it has served to minimize all the difficulties of later years. The attitude of critics and the public was illuminated for me as by fire; and no matter if a stray wolf lifts up his voice now and then, it is as music in my ears compared to that first, blood-freezing yell of the full pack. I can now say with calm equanimity and undiminished philosophy, "Leave them howl!"

I was about eight years old, and I shudder now to think of the culpable neglect of my guardian angels when I first felt the mighty urge of self-expression. I had been stirred to envy and emulation by a more or less pastoral poem which my brother near my own age had composed and confided to me.

It began:

When evening shadows darkly fall,
And lowing cattle loudly bawl,

and it seemed to me very great. But being an early feminist, I saw no reason why I should not also climb Parnassus and pluck a flower of poesy from the snow-clad summits.

So I took my slate in hand; and first seeing that the sponge dripped with water, for I had an intuition that composition might be difficult, I hid behind the ice-house, a circular, red-brick tower with a conical roof at the rear of our garden. There almost immediately the miracle happened, the divine fire fell upon me. I wrote with ease, and finished several stanzas within an hour.

There it stood, white against the background of my slate; and it rhymed! The words rhymed sweetly, intoxicatingly. It was me, and yet not me. Mine own, and yet alien. I had written it with tense, cramped fingers and out-thrust tongue, and yet nothing so beautiful had been in my head. The mystery of genius overcame me and I knew briefly the ecstasies of the visionnaire.

The poem itself was not meditative nor serene like my brother's, but more emotional, more feminine and therefore instinctively personal, unconsciously conforming to Milton's dictum that all poetry should be simple, sensuous and passionate. A mere fragment of it remains in my memory, and that is seared into my brain:

Only a face at the window,
 Only a glad how-de-do,
 Only a tender hand-clasp,
 Only some kisses, one, two.

The other stanzas were equally noteworthy and promising, and now I felt the demand of the artist for recognition, the longing to hear the plaudits of the world and feel the laurel wreath pressed down upon my brow; so I read my poem to a group of contemporaries. They received it with enthusiasm, admiration and even soul-warming awe.

But the secret was too great for their little hearts to hold, they babbled it to their parents who in turn babbled it to mine. Alice went through the looking-glass, and found

herself in a topsy-turvy world. My older brothers and sisters dramatically declaimed the verses, and even set them to ribald music.

Under this drastic treatment, I developed a complex, or an inhibition, or something; for the love motive in fiction has ever since been a difficult one for me to handle. "Let me write adventure or humor now," I say brightly to editors, "but 'don't frow me in de briar-patch' of a love story."

But to return to maiden efforts. I continued to write, but by stealth. At last a stern, sad woman who had probably broken her heart trying to instill a little knowledge into my unreceptive brain, unearthed some of these attempts and seized on them eagerly. They represented to her the one dawning ray of intelligence in what she considered an otherwise darkened intellect, and she intimated that since I showed no aptitude for anything else I might as well write.

I took her at her word. My reasons or apologies for continuing on this path are those of the man who used to say: "I drink because I like it. I like the taste, and I like the effect." So I write and write and have no intention of stopping. If this be a threat, make the most of it.

ANNE HELENA WOODRUFF

An account of my maiden effort must include all my efforts or there is no story to tell. I was well on towards middle age before it occurred to me that I might do something in the writing line myself, and I was poorly equipped for the venture. My education—what there was of it—was acquired in a country school, supplemented by six months at the State Normal Academy at Brockport, New York, and a short course in a Correspondence School of Journalism.

From a very early age there was magic for me in the sight of a book. I remember to this day my delight at finding a small volume in my Christmas stocking—a book devoid of embellishment, bearing the title of "Friendship's Token."

A tiny volume of verse, it was, its contents better suited to the mature mind than mine at that time.

My first literary venture was in verse, which I timidly sent to *The Presbyterian Review* of Toronto. Its appearance in print, without any notification of its acceptance, almost frightened me, so astounding was the fact that it had been deemed worthy of a place in the pages of that conservative publication. It gave me the stimulus I needed to persevere when in danger of being snowed under by a multitude of rejection-slips, thus bringing my literary career to an untimely end.

My first check, for two dollars, was from *Good House-keeping*, and not even a check from *St. Nicholas* for a larger amount, received later, had power to give me the thrill I experienced at the sight of that small check.

Since that time I have plodded on with varying degrees of success—and failure. Editors have been kind and courteous, with here and there an exception to break the monotony. Since this is a “confession,” the unpleasant must have a place as well as the reverse. In one instance the editor scribbled on the rejection-slip, “Better confine yourself to subjects with which you are acquainted”—good advice, which I have faithfully tried to follow ever since. I felt no resentment, and afterwards sent articles to that self-same editor, who accepted and printed them. Another and more depressing comment was to the effect that no “inferior matter was desired” by that particular publication. Doubtless the article was inferior, and nobody to blame but myself.

My three books were juveniles.

The first, “Betty and Bob,” was brought out in 1903 by the Frederick A. Stokes Company. It fell short of a thousand copies, after which I was to receive a royalty of ten per cent. It is now out of print. The second book was “Three Boys and a Girl,” published by the Western Methodist Book Concern. It was written to the title, “A Boy’s Business Ventures,” which I still consider more appropriate to the story than the other. The publishers, however, were of a different opinion. “The Pond in the Marshy Meadow”

—a sort of Nature Fairy story—was brought out by the Saalfield Publishing Company, of Akron, Ohio. I have heard this book called “a peach.” The Press gave it a fine send-off, one reviewer going so far as to assert that “not since ‘Westward Ho’ had there appeared such another juvenile.”

The Press has been kinder to my books than has the purchasing public. The books are a failure financially but my thanks are due to the readers of those three publishing houses; for their favorable verdicts enabled me to realize my ambition and to become the accredited author of three really, truly, sure-enough books, and to leave a few faint footprints on the sands of time.

I have a horror of venturing bodily into the editorial presence, but send out my wares from the safety and security of the chimney corner—figuratively speaking—where no irate and long-suffering editor can get at me with anything more deadly than a rejection-slip which, though deadly enough, in some respects, is wholly inadequate when pitted against the dogged persistence of the literary aspirant.

If swiftly failing eyesight did not prevent, I should hope to accomplish something worth while, for what I have mentioned here seems to me now as simply a maiden effort.

HAROLD BELL WRIGHT

Considering the painful fact that every mother’s son and daughter of the million or more professional critics will most strenuously assert that I have yet to accomplish “my first *literary* effort,” this request from the Editor, I confess, is rather a good joke. However, a careful study of the formidable list of names submitted for my encouragement heartens me. Upon second thought I am convinced that in such a company of distinguished authors, I shall stand alone.

I, alone, of the whole ungodly crew have no literary efforts, maiden or matured, to confess.

The vital question of literature being thus settled to the satisfaction of everybody, there is left for me nothing but to offer the sad tale of my first crime. My initial offense in the long series of atrocities that brought me to my present degradation was committed in *The Christian Standard*, a religious weekly published in Cincinnati. As I remember, the year was Eighteen Hundred and Ninety-five. Thank God I have forgotten the details. Discerning judges will not fail to note the significance of this, my first choice of a publisher, in its bearing upon my infamous career and so will properly credit me with genius of a sort.

That I was not, in those young days, sufficiently depraved by nature to endure without a struggle the poignant emotions entailed by such success, is evidenced by the fact that eight years passed before I was hardened by various other minor attempts to the point of perpetrating my first novel.

This outrage, too, was published by a religious weekly, *The Christian Century*, or rather, to be exact, I should say it was published in part. The editor cut it—he cut it religiously—one might say he carved it. In answer to my protests this Christian editorial martyr explained gently, “But, my dear boy, your drunken men actually stagger; and really you know, my readers do not like to see such things.”

Years have taught me that the editor was right; drunken men must not stagger. But the editor did not go far enough—he really should have slaughtered the whole staggering monstrosity.

Later, Mr. E. W. Reynolds, then a Chicago book-seller, for reasons best known to himself forced this fearful horror upon his defenseless customers—staggers and all—and I was thus established in my deplorable profession.

EDITH FRANKLIN WYATT

When we were children, my sister and I were always playing games with the various imaginary figures who surround all children; and when I was about ten, and she about six, on rainy Saturdays and Sundays we used to write down the adventures of these persons in a magazine called *Childhood*.

The issue of *Childhood* consisted invariably of a single copy laboriously printed with a lead pencil by me, lavishly illustrated by my sister with fictive characters all presented in profile. We were the publishers, editors, contributors and illustrators of this magazine; and, with a sympathetic friend of seven, formed its entire circulation. The leading feature was a serial story—"Griselda Maidenhood Smith"—narrating the adventures of a little girl of Ohio pioneer days who wore pantalets and rode in stage coaches and on river boats. She was accompanied in her perpetual journeyings by a faithful servant, Nance, whose sole property was a dish-pan.

From the publication of a single hand-printed copy of my works for an audience of three, I emerged a few years later as a playwright, in possession of two hand-written copies of a drama of the occult, "The Veiled Lady," whose audience and actors were four—my sister and myself and two other girls.

From my audience of four, and my two copies of "The Veiled Lady" I advanced at about fourteen with a sudden leap.

Virginia Tracy, then an energetic, plunging child of thirteen, appeared at Miss Rice's Higher School for Girls to fill me with an admiration that proved to be life-long. Miss Tracy had written profusely—poems, stories and historical essays. She was engaged on a play—I think about a hunchback concealed in a chimney in Paris; and I, on a second drama, "A Bad Beginning but a Good Ending," about a heroine whose parents opposed her love for an artist. Unimpeded by these undertakings or by our studies we initiated

with four other girls a monthly magazine, *Sparks*—well named in one respect, as it was destined to fly upward into nothingness.

Sparks had a serial, a historical novel, editorials, stories, and contributions, known to us as “jokes,” though as I recall them I cannot imagine why. We all wrote all the departments of the magazine. Miss Tracy’s uncle helpfully supplied us with an apparatus of carbon pencil and carbon paper from which by diligent industry and rapid penmanship, four copies of *Sparks* could be produced in from three to four afternoons—three of these copies being all but illegible. These four copies circulated among the eighty or ninety pupils of Miss Rice’s School.

But the strain of publication for the publishers and the strain of reading for the readers of the last three most difficult copies proved too arduous for all of us: and, after three issues, *Sparks* expired forever.

From the circulation of my works among three persons, four persons and Miss Rice’s School, I progressed to an appearance in actual print in two college magazines at Bryn Mawr—*The Lantern* and *Unburnt Matches*, this last a rich miscellany of all our rejected works assembled by the class of Ninety-six. As with *Childhood* and *Sparks*, the phenomenon of *Unburnt Matches* was a splendid though unconscious exhibition of social unity in expression—the writers, publishers, editors and readers of *Unburnt Matches* being all the same.

It cannot be said that the appearance of my efforts up to this point may be described strictly as publication. It was not so much that my writings were made public as that they became less private.

In the Autumn of 1897, the *Chap-Book* of Chicago accepted and published two sketches of mine, “The Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing” and

THANKSGIVING DAY AT EAST POMFRET

It was the last Thursday in November. The weather was crisp, clear and cold—the typical weather of a New England Thanksgiving.

The local color was shining fresh and bright all over East Pomfret, Maine, and dear Grandma Blodgett was bustling about, in an atmosphere redolent of mincemeat and pumpkin pie, among the customary troops of bright-faced children.

A roaring fire was flaming in the great fireplace; and Ezekiel, the hired man, dragging in the heavy, bumping firelogs, was cracking paragraph after paragraph of dry Yankee jests.

The young people were all clustered around their favorite Aunt Prudence, a blue-eyed maiden lady, with a delicate flush still glowing in her rose-leaf cheeks. Her lover, Uncle Ben, had, of course, been lost at sea twenty years before.

After four pages of Thanksgiving Dinner and New England bustle, interspersed with gentle counsel from Aunt Prudence and hearty wisdom from Ezekiel, the old-fashioned knocker sounded.

Deborah, flushed with the exertion of handling great platters of meat and huge dishes of pies, flew to the door. Upon the step stood a tall, stalwart, rough-bearded stranger.

“Deborah, my hearty,” he roared, “don’t you know me? Shiver my timbers—it’s little Ben, come back after all these years. . But lie low. We mustn’t shock mother.”

His precaution was too late; for the ears of love are quick, and Grandma Blodgett had heard, from the dining room, the tones of the strange and yet familiar voice.

She hastened into the hall; and in an instant her mother's eyes had pierced the disguise of years and tan, and she had cast herself into the arms of the weather-beaten stranger.

There were three pages of general conversation.

They had all admired the sharks' teeth, the sea-beans, the sandalwood fans, the India shawls, and the elephants' tusks which Uncle Ben had brought in the wonderful little teak-wood chest he had carried there under his arm.

When they had exhausted themselves in praises, Uncle Ben, with a merry twinkle in his honest blue eyes, quietly drew from his pocket a small package, and placed it on the table.

"Every Thanksgiving," he said, "I have read the magazine stories."

He lighted a match and applied it to the little parcel.

"This kind of thing must be stopped," he said.

There was a loud explosion; and Grandma Blodgett, sweet Aunt Prudence, the Thanksgiving cheer, the dry, humorous and rough-bearded Uncle Ben himself, were all blown up together.

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